

# ŚRĪ GURU DARSANAM



TEACHINGS OF  
ŚRĪ HARIDĀSA ŚĀSTRĪ MAHĀRĀJA



Śrī Śrī Gaura Gadādharaṁ vijayetaṁ!

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Śrī Śrī Gaura Gadādhara Vijayetām

# Śrī Guru Darśanam

An Anthology of Questions and Answers  
with

Śrī Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja Navatīrtha

Compiled and Edited by Satyanarayana Dasa

All glories to Śrī Śrī Gadādhara-Gaura!

All glories to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govindadeva!

All glories to our beloved and respected Gurudeva!

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## Introduction

In *Bhagavad Gītā* (4.34), Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna that to know the Truth, he should approach a qualified guru:

*tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinah*

“Understand this knowledge by prostrating, by rendering service and by in-depth inquiry from teachers. Those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge.”

In this verse, the qualification of a guru and conduct of a student are mentioned briefly. The guru must be well-educated, *jñānī*. He must have thorough knowledge of scripture, *śāstra*, otherwise he is not capable of dispelling the doubts of a sincere student. He also must have intuitive vision of Reality, *tattva-darśana*, otherwise he would not be able to guide the student in his or her spiritual practice. This also implies that he must have followed the prescribed process himself to achieve such a state. His conduct must be exemplary for the students.

At the same time, the students must be very sincere and humble. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa recommends bowing down at the feet of the guru, *pranipātena*. He must be eager to learn and willing to ask questions, *paripraśnena*. The prefix *pari* in this word implies thoroughness. The student should not have any lurking doubts in his/her mind: All doubts must be clarified. Questioning also indicates a sense of humility. Sometimes a proud student may bow down in front of his guru, but, considering himself learned, does not pose his doubts in front of his guru, lest others think of him as ignorant. Moreover, the questioning must be done in a sober and respectful mood and not in a challenging manner. Along with mentioning *pranipātena* and *paripraśnena*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions *sevā*. A student should render service to the guru. A real guru does not make a business out of his/her instruction, but teaches out of compassion and affection for the student. For this, he must be respected. Service to the guru should be done without any vested interest. Service is not the same as work. A student should always feel a sense of gratitude towards his guru, because what he is learning cannot be compared to anything material. These three activities prescribed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa imply that humility manifests at the physical, vocal, and mental levels. Real humility includes all three of them.



When an authentic guru and a sincere student meet, knowledge is transferred from guru to the student. This is called *paramparā* or *sampradāya*. This was the traditional system of education in India. Now that India has subscribed to the Western system of education, the traditional system is a story of the past. Students in general have no experience of the old system.

However, in some parts of India, in some hidden corners, the traditional system is still alive. One such place is Shri Haridas Niwas at Kalidaha in Vrindavan. The founder of this *āśrama* was Śrottriya Bhagavān-niṣṭhā Śrī Śrī 108 Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja. He did not participate in any of the local social programs, but instead lived a life of a recluse engaged in his *bhajan*, worshipping his Bhagavān Śrī Śrī Gadādhara Gaura and Rādhā-Govindadeva, serving cows, writing books, and teaching his students. He was the most learned saint of Vrindavan in the recent times. He had a graduate degree in all six schools of Hindu Philosophy (*ṣaḍ-darśana*), in Jyotiṣa, Sāhitya, and a postgraduate degree in Nyāya. He wrote and published more than 80 books in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, and English. He lived a life according to *bhakti śāstra* and realized the goal described therein.

He regularly taught *śāstra* in the evening and I, together with others, used to do *sevā* in his cowshed in the evening. After our *sevā* was completed, we would enter the temple room and bow down at the feet of our Gurudeva. Besides teaching a specific *śāstra*, he had a question and answer session. I recorded the questions asked by the students and his answers. He answered in Hindi, which I used to translate extempore into English for the non-Hindi speaking students. Later on, I had these tapes transcribed and arranged them according to topic. Most of this work was done by Bhakti Devi and Gauracandra Dasa. To make it reader-friendly, I did the initial editing, and the final editing was done by Śrī Advaita Prabhu Dasa. I made photocopies of this work and distributed it among students of Gurudeva. Everybody felt inspired by reading it, and all benefitted. In consultation with Śrī Sandeep Mittal, secretary of Śrī Haridas Niwas Goseva Sansthan, we decided to print it as a tribute to our Śrī Gurudeva. The outcome is in your hands. I recommend that every student of Śrī Gurudeva read this book. Primarily the book is meant for the disciples of Śrī Gurudeva so that they can remain in tune with the *bhāva* of Śrī Gurudeva. He speaks on varied subjects, and his answers are very authentic, thought-provoking and enlivening and inspire one to take one's devotional practice seriously. He answers many common questions that are likely to arise in the mind of a student and still many more that may not come into one's mind. When he was physically present, we could approach him and ask any question. We have lost that fortune, but he still speaks to us through his sagacious words in this book.

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Satyanarayana Dasa





# 1. Academia

**QUESTION:** Western scholars do not accept that all Vedic scriptures have the same author. These scholars have different theories regarding the language in which the Vedas, Upaniṣads, and Purāṇas are written. Can you say something regarding this controversy between Western scholars and the Vaiṣṇava view?

**ANSWER:** There are two types of people: *deva* and *asura*, or *sat* and *asat* (those who are saintly and those who are materialistic). People of the first type accept the existence of God, and the others deny it.

If you look at the world, it is clear that some person has created it. It has not just come into existence without anyone creating and maintaining it. Human beings have not evolved from monkeys, as proposed by the theory of evolution. As for this world, there are a number of theories that you could believe—either that many people have created it over a period of time, or you can accept the theory of evolution, or you can accept there is some omnipotent person, who has created it.

The same is true with the Vedas. Vedic knowledge exists. There are people who say that the Vedas were created by hypocrite *brāhmaṇas* because they wanted to benefit from it by exploiting the rest of society. They argue that there is no reality in them. That is the opinion of Cārvāka and his followers. What Western scholars are saying isn't new. Even in the past, people have made similar kinds of statements.

It is up to us whether we want to follow the theory propounded by frivolous people or the words of the *sāstra*. Western scholars make statements, despite not having any proof. They simply ask, "Who wrote it?," or else they say, "There are different people who wrote it," or even that "It's written by different people, because the language is different." They make statements without proof or knowledge of the truth. Our response is that if somebody is an omniscient person, then why can't he know different languages? Why should he stick to a single type or pattern of language?

Consider the people who have accepted the Vedas as authority. They are not people who are interested in cheating others nor are they the type of people who have some personal motives to achieve by saying, "It is created by God." Compare the people who accept the Vedas as authority with the people who assert that the creation

just came into being on its own and that the Vedas are written by different people. You should compare the people who are accepting the Vedas as authority and as the word of God with the character, motives, and ability of Western scholars. You have to see whether they match in character, austerity, and knowledge, and who is superior and who is to be trusted.

Secondly, if the Vedas are written by different people, then how do we explain statements like, “Veda is the breath of God” or that “God Himself gave the Vedas to Brahmā”? When writing a book, you do not attribute your writing to somebody else; rather you say, “I wrote it.” And if we accept that the Vedas were written by different people at different times, then surely they would indicate that they were writing this part of the book and somebody else is writing another part. Who is the person who wants to write a book and not take credit for it? And if the author is so great that he is not taking credit for writing it, then why do you not believe what he is saying, that the Vedas are a creation of God? Does it matter? If such selfless people wrote it, then it is as good as God gave it.

Why do we have to follow the conclusions of those people whose character and motives are dubious? Moreover, Western scholars are not unanimous in their opinion. So which version shall we accept?

Ultimately, what is important is the teaching in the Vedas. It does not matter whether God spoke them, revealed them to some sages, or some sages wrote them. People who accept the authority of the Vedas follow their teachings and bring a change in their life. Those who are researching on their authorship do so only for some material gain. They have no interest in their message. Their interest is limited to write a paper, thesis, or a book. For that they must say something new. Therefore, they have various theories about the origin of the Veda. But the traditional view is only one and it is found in the Veda itself.

## 2. Vaiṣṇava vs. Academic Approach

**QUESTION:** One of the main differences between a traditional approach to *śāstra* and an academic approach is that in the traditional approach, you can take quotes from any source, be it from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Upaniṣads or the *Ṛg-Veda*. There is no sense of chronology, provided your quote is appropriate to the context, and you can prove your point by that quote. In the academic approach you can't do that, because there is a chronology,

and the material from the Purāṇas cannot be used to reflect the age of the Upaniṣads. The material of the Upaniṣads cannot be used to reflect the culture of the Ṛg-Veda in the same way as today's newspaper cannot tell us anything about the day of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's literature cannot tell us anything about Julius Cesar's invasion of England, because there is a chronology involved. Given that, how should a Vaiṣṇava try to balance the traditional Vaiṣṇava perspective (lateral) with the academic (chronological), which is based on very sound linguistic and other arguments?

Just to give an example, in the traditional approach, the oldest age is the Satyayuga. Now the descriptions of the Satyayuga that we get from the *Mahābhārata* or the small statements in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, are completely different from what the oldest age is considered to be in an academic approach, which is the era of the *Ṛg Veda*. So the life and culture of the *Ṛg Veda*, as represented in the *Ṛg Veda*, is very different from what we understand the Satyayuga to be. And there are many other problems. So how does a person who is trying to be a Vaiṣṇava and trying to accept the *śāstra* as absolute, which is of course a prerequisite of a disciple, make sense of these two areas of discourse, these two different worlds, these two different approaches—one chronological and one a kind of lateral where you can take anything from anywhere?

ANSWER: Basically, there are two paths one can choose from: One is *paramārthika*, meaning the spiritual path, and the other is *vyāvahārika*, the *laukika*, or material path, and these are two different styles.

In the first (*paramārthika*) one accepts God as omniscient, one studies according to the *paramparā* tradition and one has to abide by certain rules and regulations.

In the latter (*vyāvahārika*) path, one also has to study from other people. Not everybody makes his own philosophy. Rather, one takes help from others, but these other persons are not free from motives, and they desire personal gain. There may be some ulterior motive behind it, some desire for name or fame, or something they have to gain out of it. In this path there are also certain rules which one has to follow, but the purpose of this path is not the same as that of the *paramārthika* path.

In essence: First one has to understand where one's *niṣṭhā*, or loyalty is—whether it is in *paramārtha* or in *vyāvahārika*. And if one has *niṣṭhā* in *paramārtha*, then one has to deliberate on *śāstra*—what



śāstra says, what the guru says, and how the sages have spoken. So understand that, and after proper deliberation, make a resolve, and follow that.

But when one is dealing with the *vyāvahārika* path, then one should follow their style, how they present things, how they accept their *pramāṇas* or their processes of explaining things, and then one can deal with that accordingly.

If somebody is a good scientist, he understands that even if you study nature, there is so much information available and so many things that are still unknown. This makes one consider the existence of some super power. Even if you study one leaf, there is so much information inside the leaf that you cannot say that you know everything about it. When one comes to the understanding that there are many deeper things and that there is something which is superior and beyond one's own capacity of understanding, then one is ready for something more.

This will only happen if one is unbiased, but generally on the *vyāvahārika* path, people are not unbiased thinkers, although they claim to be unbiased. They have their own nature, their own *guṇas* and *samskāras* from their childhood or past life. When they are doing their studies, besides their bias, they have further agendas. When they are studying, because of their own mental frame which they have acquired from a particular background, they tend to see things in a particular manner.

They keep coming up with different theories. Even amongst their colleagues, there is not always a definite conclusion. But if one has to deal with them and work in their own field, then whatever setups they have, one has to follow their norms.

As far as the spiritual path is concerned, one must have truthfulness and *śraddhā* in *śāstra*.

In my own example, right from my childhood, I was brought up like this; that there is *śāstra*, one should be truthful, and *dharma*, or religion, should not be used for any material gain, for name, fame, or making money. When I came to Vrindavan, I studied scriptures related to the Vaiṣṇava culture from my guru, and then by his order, I studied subjects from other teachers also in Vrindavan, like Nyāya, etc., and the philosophies of other schools. Then he ordered me to go to Benares to study further.

When leaving for Benares, many Vaiṣṇavas commented that if one goes to Benares, one will never come back from there. This had happened to many people in the past. Once they go to Benares, it is like going to Harvard, and then nobody wants to leave that atmosphere, because the whole culture is different. In fact, there is a saying that if one does not fall into the clutches of five things in Benares, only then can he return from there. The first thing to avoid in Benares is the prostitutes, because there are plenty of them there. Secondly, one has to be weary of the bulls. Benares is the place of Śiva and people therefore allow the bulls to wander freely at their will because they are the carrier of Śiva. This is a religious practice. There are so many dangerous bulls in Benares that you could be hit by. Thirdly, be cautious when walking down the stairs which lead to the Gaṅgā River, as they are very steep and dangerous. If you slip on these stairs, you could fall and be carried away by the current. Fourthly, there are *sannyāsīs* who always want to catch you and make you their disciple, and lastly, there is the attraction for the educational system in Benares. One feels that if one were to leave Benares, where else would one find this atmosphere?" So, one does not want to leave.

I also lived with the *sannyāsīs*. I met some very high-class *sannyāsīs*, and many of them tried to influence me, but finally they all told me, "Nobody can change you." It was true as none of them had any effect on me. I did my study and my consciousness was always here in Vṛndavan. I studied practically everything—theistic philosophy, atheistic philosophy, and even Western philosophy. I came back, and my *śraddhā* remained only on this path. Even when I teach other philosophies, whether it is Yoga, Sāṅkhya, or Nyāya, I teach it according to that particular philosophy. But that does not mean that I myself change or believe in it.

This is the *paramārthika* path, where one has a fixed *śraddhā* and a guru, and one follows him.

When it comes to dealing with the material world, *vyavahāra*, one deals according to the material norms. For example, if one has to teach Sāṅkhya, one should teach what is in the book. It is not that one should interpret and twist the whole thing. That is another thing, that you may say, "Vaiṣṇavas say like this." But it should be taught according to the norms of that philosophy. In the same way, if one is dealing with the material world, *vyavahāra*, then one does it exactly like them.

As far as chronology and lateral thinking, we must know that the Western approach to time is different than the traditional Indian approach. The Western approach is influenced by Christianity, which believes in linear time. They believe in an absolute beginning of creation and one life span. The Indian approach is that time is cyclic. We believe in rebirth and an eternal life. Satyayuga does not come only once. Before Satyayuga was Kaliyuga, and after the present Kaliyuga, there will be Satyayuga again. The Vedas and Purāṇas are not giving a chronological description of events. They speak of events from different *yugas* from different cycles. This is beyond the linear thinking mind. There may be chronology in the Vedas and Purāṇas, but that is not their aim. Their main aim is to teach theology and philosophy. Thus, the Western scholars make a fundamental mistake of assuming them to be chronological. Therefore, their conclusions do not have much value for those who are on the spiritual path.

**QUESTION:** Is it a useful service to try to present *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* in an academic *vyāvahārika* situation?

**ANSWER:** Yes. It is *sevā*.

### 3. Acintya bheda-abheda

**QUESTION:** Can you explain how Bhagavān is devoid of different types of *bhedas*?

**ANSWER:** Bhagavān has potencies; and between *śakti* (potency) and *śaktimāna* (who possesses the potency), there is no *bheda* (difference) or *abheda* (non-difference). He is the only one who exists, and He is the possessor of the potencies. You cannot say that there is absolute *bheda* (difference) between Him and His potencies, nor can you say that there is *abheda* (non-absolute difference). In reality, there is neither *bheda* nor *abheda*. It is unavoidable to consider that Bhagavān is simultaneously *bheda* and *abheda*, one and different, because nothing else can explain reality properly.

**QUESTION:** So, all the other Vaiṣṇava philosophies then are incomplete in their conception?

**ANSWER:** The other philosophies try to explain this difference and non-difference by using different words. If you analyze them closely, then you will see that each one of them has to accept both difference and non-difference simultaneously.



For example, take Viśiṣṭādvaita, qualified monism. The word *viśiṣṭa* means qualified. So, qualified with what? Then you have to say it is qualified with *māyā-śakti* and *jīva-śakti*. Then the question arises, with what relationship is it qualified? Basically, the relations are *samyoga sambandha*, which means physical contact, and *samavāya sambandha*, or inherent contact. Both of these are impossible. *Samyoga* is between two separate objects. Then *māyā* or *jīva* could not be His own potency. And if you take *samavāya* as the relation, then it becomes a permanent characteristic; so all the defects of the material world would be inherent in Bhagavān. Therefore, a separate relation called *aprthaka-siddhi* is accepted.

Similarly, when you say *bhedābheda*, then it is like Nṛsiṃha—one part is like a lion and the other is like a human being. Reality is not divided into two. Therefore, it is qualified by the word *svābhāvika*, or natural. But by calling it natural, the problem of the limitations of *māyā* being reflected in the Absolute is unavoidable.

Or, if you say Śuddhādvaita, the pure monism of Vallabhācārya, then what is the impurity, which is not found in Advaita? You give a qualification to distinguish it from something. So, if the Absolute is Śuddhādvaita, then what is *āsuddhādvaita*?

The point is that Bhagavān is *acintya*, or trans-rational, which means *śāstraika-gamyam*, He can be known only from scriptures and not by logic alone. It is like the heat energy of fire. It exists in the fire; it is its own *svarūpa*. It is neither beyond its own *svarūpa* nor can it exist independently. In this sense, there is oneness; yet heat and fire are not absolutely one. Similarly, Bhagavān has potency, and thus there is variety, as we can all perceive; yet the Absolute has to be one. It can be known only from *śāstra*. So basically the explanations of all other philosophies are based on logic, but that does not work, even though they also give *pramāṇa*, or authority of *śāstra*. No one, however, can deny the *acintya* concept. All the philosophies have accepted the inconceivable feature of the Absolute.

Monism also cannot be established, because it is called *advaita*. *Advaita* means, *na dvaita iti advaita*—that which is not *dvaita* (dual). And “not” can have six different meanings:

- 1) It is similar to *dvaita*.
- 2) There is non-existence of *dvaita*.
- 3) There is a little of *dvaita*.
- 4) It is different from *dvaita* (it could be one or three or four).
- 5) It is not a very good *dvaita*.
- 6) It is contrary to *dvaita*.

None of these can prove monism. Even if you say *advaita* is that which is not two, or *dvaita*, which means complete non-existence of two; you still cannot say “not two” unless “two” exists. You cannot deny the existence of something unless the object exists. If it never existed, then there is no sense in saying, “It does not exist.” Whenever you say that something does not exist, it means that it exists somewhere in the past, present, or future. If it has never existed, does not exist now, anywhere, and will never exist in the future, then you can never say, “It does not exist.” So to deny the existence of something, you have to first accept its existence. Therefore, there is no possibility of *advaita*, unless *dvaita* is accepted. And if *advaita* is absolute, then *dvaita* must also be absolute.

Similarly, all the other meanings of *advaita*, such as, “not too much of *dvaita*,” or “separate from *dvaita*,” or “not a very good *dvaita* (*apṛāṣatya*)”—all these meanings do not prove monism.

#### 4. Acintya-śakti: Understandable Only from Śāstra

QUESTION: How can we understand *acintya-śakti*?

ANSWER: One can understand *acintya-śakti* only by *śabda pramāṇa*, the authority of the revealed scriptures, and not with one's senses. It is just like the *haritakī* fruit (myrobalan) which can balance all three *doṣas*, or humors of the body, at the same time. Logically this is not understandable. Nobody would conceive of such a thing on their own, because a medicine which balances one *doṣa*, say *pitta*, would work adversely on another, say *kapha*. But *haritakī* has the inconceivable potency to balance all three. We only know about this from *śāstra*.

#### 5. Ahaṁgraha-upāsanā

QUESTION: In *Bhakti Sandarbha* it is described that one who is doing *ahaṁgraha-upāsanā* (worshipping oneself as God) can attain *sārūpya-mukti*, the same form as *Bhagavān*. How can he attain *sārūpya-mukti* if *ahaṁgraha-upāsanā* is against *bhakti*?

ANSWER: They get *mukti*, not *bhakti*. Just getting *sārūpya* does not mean that he becomes a devotee. It is not a problem for *Bhagavān* to accommodate some people in His abode. *Bhakti* means service. And why should *Bhagavān* give *bhakti* to someone who does not like to do service?

## 6. Anādi Avidyā (Beginningless Ignorance)

**QUESTION:** In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, it is described that the *jīva*'s ignorance or his condition of being *kṛṣṇa-vaimukhya* is *anādi* (beginningless). It is described that this is a kind of defect of the *jīva* which is *anādi* and thus causeless. Why is that a defect on the part of the *jīva*?

**ANSWER:** The *anādi avidyā*, or beginningless ignorance, is a defect, because it makes a *jīva bahirmukha*, or averse to devotion. But this defect can come to an end. The *jīva* is part of Bhagavān's *tatastha-śakti*, or intermediary potency. Out of that, some of the *jīvas* are causelessly *bahirmukha*. But this *avidyā* has the characteristic that it can come to an end. It is *prāgabhāva*, pre-nonexistence (something with no beginning, but which has an end = *anādi*). The *jīvas*' ignorance is without any beginning, but it will come to an end. *Prāgabhāva* has the significance that sooner or later it will come to an end. It is not *atyantābhāva* (eternal non-existence) or *pradhvaṁsābhāva* (post-non-existence; something with a beginning, but no end). These are the two types of unending *abhāvas*. *Prāgabhāva*, however, comes to an end, and that happens when a living entity meets a devotee of Bhagavān.

When a *jīva* meets a devotee, his material existence will come to an end. This happens *yadṛcchayā*, by the will of *Īśvara*. So at that time, the living entity should accept the association of a devotee and then he will start to correct the defect; otherwise he will remain absorbed in material engagement.

As it is said in SB 11.2.37:

*bhayam dvitīyābhīniveśataḥ syād  
īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ  
tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet tam  
bhaktyaikayeśam guru-devatātmā*

"A person who is not devoted to Bhagavān because of His *māyā*, has forgetfulness, improper knowledge, and fear because of absorption into the second (bodily conception). Therefore, an intelligent person should worship Bhagavān who is the teacher manifest, treating Him as the worshipable deity and the object of love."

When the *jīva* has this *bahirmukha* state, this mood of aversion towards *Īśvara*, then he has *dvitīyābhīniveśa*, absorption in the second (the body), then he is separated and he has *smṛiti viparyaya*,

forgetfulness of *paratattva*, *Īśvara*. And then he is under the influence of *māyā*, but that *māyā* belongs to *Bhagavān*. So if one wants to get rid of this *māyā*, then *tam ābhajet*, an intelligent person should accept and worship a guru and should consider him *devatā-ātmā*, worshipable, and also the object of love, *ātmā*.

In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, *Jīva Gosvāmī* shows the cause of our bondage. Although the *avidyā* of the *jīva* is causeless, he is trying to establish a cause-effect relationship. Although this ignorance is beginningless, in that peculiar situation it still can be considered as a causal situation.

QUESTION: Should we feel guilty that we have *anādi avidyā*?

ANSWER: No, but now you should use this chance to become *Kṛṣṇa* conscious.

## 7. Anarthas

QUESTION: Does *anartha* mean to have a different desire from guru and *Kṛṣṇa*?

ANSWER: *Anartha* means anything which is not *artha*, or that which is not ultimately what we want. *Anartha* means that which is unwanted.

QUESTION: If we desire to act properly, to do service favorably, does this already mean that we are free from *anartha*, even if there are some faults?

ANSWER: First try to understand what *anartha* is, and then the answer will reveal itself. *Anartha* means something which is undesirable for devotion to *Kṛṣṇa*. So anything other than what is desirable for pleasing *Kṛṣṇa*, whether it is *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, or *mokṣa*, is all *anartha*. So you have to first identify whether your desire is for pure devotion or for some other cause.

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QUESTION: What are *anarthas* and how does one get rid of them?

ANSWER: *Anartha* is of five types: *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa*.



*Avidyā* means to consider unreal objects as real, or illusionary objects as true. *Asmitā* is attachment of one's ego to this body, and that gives intense desire (*rāga*) for accumulating sense objects or material objects, and so one becomes attached to them. If there is any obstacle in the way of the person acquiring the object they desire, then they get the desire to remove the obstacle and thus develop hatred (*dveṣa*) for that. In that way the duality of *rāga* and *dveṣa* comes. There is also the fear of death (*abhiniveśa*) because of one's absorption in this body. These are called *anarthas*. How to remove them is described in SB 11.2.37:

“A person who is not devoted to Bhagavān because of His *māyā* has forgetfulness, improper knowledge, and fear because of absorption in the second (bodily conception). Therefore, an intelligent person should worship Bhagavān who is the teacher, the worshipable deity, and the object of love.”

This *bhaya* (fear) comes because of *abhiniveśa* (absorption in the body). Then follows *viparyaya* (knowing things wrongly), which means taking *asatya* as *satya*, or mistaking unreal things as real, and then forgetfulness (*asmṛti*) of the reality. All these *anarthas* can only go away if one takes shelter of the guru and serves him. The guru is to be treated as God. Then this *avidyā*, or ignorance, will go away. One should behave with the guru in the same way one would treat Kṛṣṇa if one were to meet Him. We should be without any cheating propensities, sincere, truthful, and then follow his instructions and serve him. In that way, the guru is considered as the litmus test of one's devotion. And if one has this type of surrender to his guru, then his/her ignorance will go away and one's *anarthas* will be removed.

The same thing is also described in this verse:

ādaḥ śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-  
saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā  
tato 'nārtha-nivṛttiḥ syāt  
tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ

athāsaktis tato bhāvas  
tataḥ premābhyudañcati  
sādhakānāṃ ayaṁ premṇaḥ  
prādurbhāve bhavet kramāḥ

(BRS 1.4.15-16)

First one has *śraddhā*, which means firm faith in *śāstra* and the resolve to follow it, and then one has *sādhū-saṅga*. Although *sādhū-saṅga* literally means the association of a *sādhū*, here the word *sādhū* actually means guru. So, *sādhū-saṅga* means taking shelter of the guru. *Sādhū-saṅga* means learning philosophy from one's guru.

Then comes *bhajan-kriyā*, or service. Basically, *bhajana-kriyā* means service to the guru, and not merely chanting and going around with one's bead bag. There are no examples of this. When you see the *gopīs*, Pāṇḍavas, or Vidura, they are not carrying their bead bags around, but rather they are always surrendered and serving Bhagavān. Now people have made a difference between *bhajan* and *sevā*. They think that *bhajan* is different from *sevā*. Lazy people, those who do not want to do service, *sevā*, propagate this idea. They are interested only in *bhajan*. Doing *bhajan* means you can have your bead bag and sleep. So this is not the process for *anartha-nivṛtti*.

*Bhajan* and *sevā* are not different. The meaning of the word *bhajan* is also *sevā*, but people these days think if you chant, that is *bhajan*, and if you do some work, that is *sevā*. For one, however, who is serving the guru, practically speaking, there is no need for him to do any *sādhana*. This is a simple process which has been propagated by our *ācāryas*. But people do not follow it; rather, they do all sorts of other things and, therefore, there is no *anartha-nivṛtti*.

If one follows this verse, then his *avidyā* (ignorance) is removed. And when ignorance is removed, all its by-products, such as *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa* also run away, because they all are coming from *avidyā*. This is what it means to get rid of *anarthas* or to become free of them.

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**QUESTION:** Does one purify the *anarthas* and *karma* during a dream?

**ANSWER:** During the dream, you see what you have heard, seen, or done. Dreaming is a product of your past *samskāras*, or impressions, in the heart. Dreams do not give rise to any more *karma*, and in that sense, it is getting cleared.

**QUESTION:** Is one conscious about it, about the disappearance of the *anarthas*?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is perceived directly. It is not blind faith or something that you read about, that is going to happen later on. You experience it yourself at present, not in the next life. As it is said, when one engages in *bhajana-kriyā*, there is *anartha-nivṛtti*.

First you have to know what *anartha* is, and then you have to know how these *anarthas* are to be removed. *Anarthas* are of five types: *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa*.

The first *anartha* is *avidyā*, or knowing things that are temporary to be real, or knowing that which is not real to be your self—*asatya* as *satya*. *Asmitā* is attachment of one's ego to this body. Then *raga* is attachment based on the body and *dveṣa*, hatred, is for something which comes in the path of your sense enjoyment. You want to remove it. And then there is *abhiniveśa*, absorption, fear of death, etc.

When one engages in *bhajana-kriyā*, all these things go away: *tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet taṁ bhaktyaikayeṣaṁ guru-devatātmā* (SB 11.2.37). When you perform service to guru, who is *ātmā*, or beloved, and also a worshipable person (*devatā*), you do not have any independent nature. You perform service, so you know the reality. You are not confused, mistaking the body for the self and the self for the body. Then your attachment is also in relation to the guru because you are not independent. Even what you eat, you offer it to Kṛṣṇa; when you want to wear a cloth, you offer that also. So everything you use for yourself is related to Kṛṣṇa. There is no independent *rāga* or *dveṣa*, and there is no *asmitā*, meaning feeling of "I-ness" in relation to the body, independent of Kṛṣṇa or guru. And one also does not have the fear of death because one knows that he or she is an *ātmā* distinct from the body.

All this is experienced directly when one performs devotional service. Therefore, if some *anartha* is being removed, you know it yourself. No one has to tell you this.

QUESTION: I have the impression that since I am trying to serve and do *go-sevā*, my *anarthas* are becoming stronger. They come up and are stinking. They are a disturbance for me and I think for others too. What shall I do?

ANSWER: It is natural that when one does service, all the *anarthas* will come out, because our practice of *anarthas* is beginningless. We have a liking for them and do not have a liking for service—so

naturally that all comes. If we develop a liking for service, then these *anarthas* will not come. But till then we have to continue doing service; there is no other solution. And if we are continuing to serve, then the new *saṁskāras* of service will become stronger than everything else. This is how the *anarthas* become weak.

If you like service, the *anarthas* go away immediately. But we do not have a liking for service, but rather a liking only for those things which we have practiced in the past. Those *anarthas* come naturally. Instead of thinking of these *anarthas*, we should think of the service. Then the service will become prominent and the *anarthas* will become weak. Therefore, one has to continue doing service, for these *anarthas* will not go away in one day. But if one starts liking service, the *anarthas* go away immediately.

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**QUESTION:** What is the root cause of *hṛdaya-granthi*, the knot in the heart?

**ANSWER:** Ignorance is the root cause of *hṛdaya-granthi*, which means basically identifying with the body and things related to the body. Body means both the subtle and the gross body, which includes the ego, or the feelings of “I am the doer” and “I am the enjoyer.” This manifests in the form of five types of ignorance: *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *abhiniveśa*; or as described in the *Bhāgavatam*, Third Canto: *tamas* (ignorance), *moha* (illusion of the bodily concept), *mahāmoha* (being mad after material enjoyment), *tāmisra* (anger), and *andha-tāmisra* (considering death as the ultimate thing):

*sasarja cchāyayādiyām  
pañca-parvānam agrataḥ  
tāmiśram andha-tāmiśram  
tamo moho mahā-tamaḥ*

“First Brahmā created ignorance of five types from his shadow: *tāmiśra*, *andha-tāmiśra*, *tamas*, *moha*, and *mahā-moha*.” (SB 3.20.18)

This is basically the feeling of considering oneself as this body or that the body belongs to the self. It is called “the knot in the heart,” and it actually means, “the knot in the mind,” because heart and mind are synonyms.

**QUESTION:** *Bhagavad Gītā* says that one should cut this knot with the sword of knowledge. Is it Kṛṣṇa directly, who cuts this knot?



ANSWER: Yes, because knowledge always comes from Him.

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QUESTION: I heard that just by performing the process of *bhakti*, all unwanted qualities go away automatically. Is that true or should one consciously work to remove *anarthas*?

ANSWER: On the path of *bhakti*, there is no separate endeavor for removing *anarthas*, the unwanted things. They are removed by *bhakti* itself.

*Bhakti* is the internal potency of Bhagavān, and *anarthas* are manifestations of *māyā*, which is also one of the energies of Bhagavān. But *māyā* cannot influence the internal potency. As Kṛṣṇa says, *mām eva ye prapadyante / māyām etāṁ taranti te* ("Those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this *māyā*," Gītā 7.14). It is not that you surrender and then you have to do something else to cross over *māyā*. You don't have to make extra efforts.

*Anarthas* ultimately exist because of ignorance and the identification with the body. However, when you become a devotee, then you do not identify with the body, and ignorance is dispelled. So there is no question of *anarthas* remaining. *Bhakti* itself removes *anarthas*. *Anarthas* exist when a person wants to keep his own separate identification. If there is a separatist mentality, only then can *anarthas* manifest.

On the path of *bhakti*, there is surrender, which means giving up your own separate identification. This is the meaning of surrender, or taking to devotion. In this way, the very root of *anartha* is removed. Therefore, there is no separate endeavor needed on this process, because when a person becomes a devotee, his only goal is to do favorable service and he does not have any other motives. So how will *anarthas* come?

*Bhakti* is the path where no separate endeavor is needed. It's only on other paths, like *jñāna* and *yoga*, that you have to do *pratyāhāra*, or practice to control your senses, make endeavors, and do all these things. Here in *uttama-bhakti*, it happens naturally.

QUESTION: But that applies only to people who surrender one hundred percent?

ANSWER: Yes.

**QUESTION:** And those who are fifty-fifty, they have to endeavor separately?

**ANSWER:** Fifty-fifty persons get fifty percent result.

**QUESTION:** Is it then because of improper knowledge from our previous contacts with persons who are propagating devotion, that we have developed *anarthas*?

**ANSWER:** *Anarthas* come because of ignorance or improper knowledge. Therefore, one should try to understand *bhakti* properly. Why remain in ignorance?

The human form of life is given for acquiring proper understanding, and *śāstra* clearly explains things as they are. There are examples of right and also of wrong, so that you can understand what is wrong, what is in between, and what the ultimate thing is. There is *para-dharma*, supreme duty, which is *projjhita kaitava*, without any cheating, and there is a mixture; so both sides are shown. Cheating means *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. The examples of people following these are also given in *śāstra* and one should understand them clearly, because only by understanding *bhakti*, will attachment to guru and Kṛṣṇa manifest. *Bhakti* is not a path of ignorance but the path of ultimate knowledge. So we should try to cultivate the proper understanding and proper knowledge, and then we will be situated with the right process.

If, in spite all this available knowledge, one does not accept it, then it is not the fault of God. He has given *śāstra* and *ācāryas* to teach it; so that we can accept them and understand the truth. Our responsibility is to accept it. But if one remains in ignorance, then it is one's own choice. There is no possibility of *bhakti* in ignorance.

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**QUESTION:** Is it possible that we accumulated more *anarthas* by this false preaching, which is not really pure *bhakti*, that we accumulated wrong concepts of *bhakti* and because of that, our *anarthas* increase?

**ANSWER:** You answered it yourself. Anything which will take you away from *bhakti* is *anartha*. So, if you have a wrong concept, is it bringing you near to *bhakti* or is it taking you away from it? You judge it yourself.

QUESTION: It is actually a great responsibility to preach, and if one is doing it wrongly ...

ANSWER: It is not the purpose of preaching that you have to create ignorance or misconceptions in other's minds. Preaching is to give proper knowledge.

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QUESTION: *Bhakti Sandarbha* describes the progression from *niṣṭhā* onwards, and then this verse comes from SB 1.2.19:

*tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ  
kāma-lobhādayaś ca ye  
ceta etair anāviddham  
sthitam sattve prasīdati*

"Then, not being overpowered by the products of *rajas* and *tamas* (lust, greed, etc.), the heart feels delighted being situated in *sattva*."

It is said here that he becomes situated in *sattva*. Does this refer to *viśuddha-sattva*?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Is this referring to the stage of *bhāva*, or is it just that one is becoming situated in *uttama-bhakti*, like a preliminary stage before *bhāva*?

ANSWER: This progression, which is shown in these verses, is not the progression of *rāgānugā uttama-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is of so many types, so it is shown how in *vaidhī-bhakti* and even other processes of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, there are different levels of progress. But this is not the case with *rāgānugā uttama-bhakti*.

In *rāgānugā uttama-bhakti*, when a person gets *śraddhā*, from that point onward he is free from all *anarthas* because he has *svarūpa-śakti*. And the basic characteristic of *svarūpa-śakti* is that it is always *unmukha*—it moves towards Bhagavān. Just as the external energy (*bahirmukha*) goes away from Bhagavān, with the result that the person's interest is only in external objects, in the same way the internal potency (*svarūpa-śakti*), which begins from *śraddhā*, has this natural characteristic that it naturally flows towards Bhagavān. This is *manogatir avicchinnā* (SB 3.29.11), meaning the mind's flow is unbroken towards Bhagavān.

*mad-guṇa-śruti-mātreṇa  
mayi sarva-guhāśaye  
mano-gatir avicchinnā  
yathā gaṅgāmbhaso'mbudhau*

“Just as the celestial waters of the Ganges flow unobstructed into the ocean, the minds of My devotees naturally flow towards Me, who resides in the hearts of all.”

When the mind's flow is unbroken, then naturally there is no question of *anarthas*, such as *laya*, *vikeṣepa*, etc. They do not come.

QUESTION: From the very outset, a *bhakta* is situated in the *svarūpa-śakti*?

ANSWER: Yes. And once he is situated in that, then nothing can be an obstacle to that.

QUESTION: Does the *svarūpa-śakti* grow or become more potent as one progresses?

ANSWER: It becomes more potent, but the *sādhaka* is not influenced by obstacles.

QUESTION: Does that mean that the *svarūpa-śakti* descends in the stage of *bhāva*?

ANSWER: The *svarūpa-śakti* is there right from the beginning. Therefore this *śraddhā* is not *tāmasika*, *rājasika*, or *sāttvika śraddhā*. This *śraddhā* itself is *antarāṅgā-śakti*. *Uttamā-bhaktas* do not have *anarthas*.

QUESTION: When pride, envy, and so forth appear even in an elevated personality, then what to speak of people like me. Do we have a chance?

ANSWER: These things do not happen in *uttama-bhakti*. Right from the beginning, the ignorance is removed, because you give up your independent identification. This is the source of all the problems, and this is why *anarthas* hang around. These *anarthas* do not come for *uttama-bhaktas*. And if at all anything comes, then Bhagavān Himself, who is situated in the heart, comes and destroys it.



These *anarthas* are there in other processes, but not on the path of *uttama-bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Do the *anarthas* disappear when one surrenders?

ANSWER: If *śaraṇāgati* (surrender) is taken properly, as described in the *śāstras*, then there is no more *anartha*. *Bhakti* is Bhagavān's internal potency, and it is not different from Him, because the potency and the possessor of the potency are non-different. Therefore, in Bhagavān's energy, there is no question that *anarthas* can exist. The only possibility of *anarthas* is if one commits an offense.

If one has not taken *śaraṇāgati* in the proper sense and is following the social convention, i.e., accepting a guru but not really surrendering unto him, in that case one has to go through these steps of *anartha-nivṛtti* and so forth. On other paths, they are dealing with the *guṇas* of nature and trying to purify their heart, which means trying to improve their *guṇas* to come to *sattva*. Then the process of *anartha* removal exists.

In *bhakti*, however, it is different. It begins with *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. This *śraddhā* means that one has complete trust in the words of *śāstra* and guru. Then there is no question of keeping one's own independence, because *anarthas* come when the person is thinking that he/she is independent. In reality, nobody is independent. When you think yourself independent, you do things according to your own mind, and that will create improper results.

But if one has a *śāstrīya* guru and one is fully surrendered to him and works under his guidance, then there is no possibility of *anartha*—right from the beginning, they are removed. When one takes shelter, one goes beyond *māyā*, as Kṛṣṇa says: *mām eva ye prapadyante / māyām etāṁ taranti te*, "Those who surrender unto Me cross over *māyā*" (Gītā 7.14).

This is the process of *śāstra*.

QUESTION: This *ādaḥ śraddhā*, etc.—is it for those people who are not completely surrendered?

ANSWER: Yes, in *uttama-bhakti* there is complete surrender and oneness with the guru. Then there is no more *anartha*.

QUESTION: If I surrender here, then there will be no *anarthas*. It is just like one step?

ANSWER: One step.

QUESTION: If people do not surrender completely, then does the process of *ādaṁ śraddhā*, etc., described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* work for them?

ANSWER: These steps of *ādaṁ-śraddhā*, etc., are shown for those people who do not have a natural liking for the path of *bhakti*, so that they can take it gradually. But we must understand that *bhakti* is the internal potency of Bhagavān and it is a combination of the *samvit* and *hlādinī-śakti*, which means knowledge and bliss. Because *bhakti* itself is knowledge and bliss, there is no ignorance and there is no hankering for happiness on the path of devotion, as on other paths or as people in the material world are looking for. Both are available in *bhakti* itself. So where is the possibility of *anarthas*?

*Anarthas* come because of identification with the body. This is the root cause of *anartha*, a product of ignorance. When one identifies with the body, one has the ego that he is the doer and the enjoyer himself, independently—and then one has independent motives, and this gives rise to *anarthas*. But *bhakti* is an inspiration which comes from Bhagavān, in which one gives no importance to anything else except service for the pleasure of Bhagavān. With such a mentality, there is no space for *anarthas* to enter in the mind of such a person. But when there is no natural liking, the process of *ādaṁ-śraddhā* is described.

The identification with the body or ego which people have because of the body, keeps one separate from Bhagavān. This is the problem which everybody is struggling with on other paths, whether it is *jñāna* or *yoga*. They go on struggling with this and how to get rid of it, and it is such a tedious job.

But in *bhakti* this identification with the body is naturally given up right from the beginning, because a person understands himself as a servant of Bhagavān. When he has this knowledge and acts on it, there is complete satisfaction. Then there is no possibility of any *anartha* in the mind.

In my personal case, once I accepted my guru, I never ever had any thought in my mind that I have to do something separate for myself, like build an *āśrama*, achieve education, or become something,

although I studied everything, practically speaking. But the idea never came that there is something which I want to do for myself. I always considered myself as a servant of my guru, and I served him without any agenda for the time he was alive. My own experience is that on this path of *bhakti*, the *anarthas* have no possibility of entering.

When reading *śāstra*, there are no descriptions that devotees ever deviated from the path of devotion. There are examples of *yogīs* or *jñānīs*, such as Saubhari Muni or the Kumāras, that they deviated or created disturbance. Devotees are never like that. For example Citraketu, when he was cursed by Pārvatī, he could have retaliated if he wanted. He could have counter cursed, but he did not say anything. He just came down from his airship, joined his palms in reverence before Pārvatī and said, "I accept your curse." This is why even Śiva remarked, "Just see the devotees, how they are completely fearless and not even afraid of your curse, although Citraketu was capable of also pronouncing a curse on you."

On this path of devotion, there is absolutely no possibility of *anarthas*. This is the speciality of *bhakti-mārga*. But when you do not understand *bhakti-mārga*, or when people come who do not understand it, then for these people the other process, the slow process, is shown (in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*). Otherwise, this process is completely free from *anarthas*.

You should try to understand the importance and greatness of *bhakti*. It is not just words of praise that are written in *śāstra*, or so much over glorification is given to *bhakti*. It is a fact and that must be experienced.

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QUESTION: How can we become free from material desires? Should we desire something spiritual?

ANSWER: Material desires will go when we give up the desire to enjoy material objects and instead desire spiritual objects. Just as when we desire material objects, we work for material objects; in the same way, if we want something spiritual, we have to work for spiritual objects.

It begins with *śraddhā*—that is the process. *Ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅga*, these are the gradual steps which have been shown. First you make a resolve. Just as people make a resolve for material

pleasures, in the same way one has to resolve that one wants a spiritual goal or object. And when you have resolved like that, then you work to achieve it. This will wash away the material *samskāras* which have accumulated over many lifetimes. This is the only process.

So, one must make the resolve to do favorable service, and to give up all unfavorable activities. If one works with this resolve, one gets the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. And only by that are the desires washed away. Then you will get the inspiration. The meaning of the mantra is begging for that inspiration.

Now the senses, mind, etc., are naturally inspired for material sense objects, but when one gets the mercy of Bhagavān, then such desires are washed away. Mercy means that you get inspired to work for a spiritual goal. That is the meaning of mercy.

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**QUESTION:** It was explained that the spiritual energy manifests through the senses and the mind if one serves the guru sincerely and is also free from offenses. On which level of devotional service is this experienced?

**ANSWER:** The spiritual energy manifests at the level of *śraddhā*. It begins with *śraddhā*, because that is the seed. If that is not there, then nothing is going to happen later on. Only if it is there, then only there will be *anartha-nivṛtti*. Otherwise, there is no *anartha-nivṛtti*, if there is no *śraddhā* to begin with.

When one has *śraddhā*, firm resolve, then he or she does *bhajana-kriyā*, which means *viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā* (BRS 1.2.74), or serving the guru with complete faith—not having any other motive.

In the material world, whatever we do, we try to keep ourselves separate for our own purpose. But in devotion that has to be given up. So when *bhajana-kriyā* is done, there is *anartha-nivṛtti*, and then one further realizes this fact. *Anartha-nivṛtti* cannot happen without *bhajana-kriyā*. And *bhajana-kriyā* means service. It is not just reading or giving lectures, but one has to do practical service for the guru and be with him. Because when you do the service, only then will you realize your problems. You will realize actually what your *anarthas* are, and only then they will go away. Otherwise they will not go away, because you are only doing what you want to do to please your senses. This is the most complex thing: What is actually *anartha*? And how to get rid of it? Only when one is in



the practical field, doing service, does one realize the *anarthas*, and only then is their removal possible. You have to begin with *śraddhā* and remain fixed.

On this path, one has to completely annihilate one's own existence, but not like in the philosophy of impersonalism. Oneness, self-annihilation, means having no separate motive other than the guru's service—only then is there *anartha-nivṛtti*. This is how it works.

QUESTION: Does it mean that when one has *śāstrīya-śraddhā* and is not consciously committing offenses, then one is freed from offenses?

ANSWER: Yes! Obviously, you also have to be freed from offenses, they are also *anarthas*.

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QUESTION: At the stage of *śraddhā*, once one starts doing service, then one sees the *anarthas*. But if this *śraddhā* is not there, then there is no chance of being disciplined?

ANSWER: But the *anarthas* will not go away without doing service.

QUESTION: We are also doing service before coming to this stage of *śraddhā*?

ANSWER: No other process works.

QUESTION: So when we start to see these *anarthas*, we should be encouraged to surrender cent percent?

ANSWER: There is no other way. Without service, the *anarthas* will not go. Even if you see them face-to-face, they will not go.

QUESTION: You can be serving and see the *anarthas* and still they do not go away, unless you have this deep *śraddhā*?

ANSWER: That is what I am saying.

QUESTION: And by serving they will go away?

ANSWER: The *anarthas* will go away only by service.

■

**QUESTION:** I heard that because *bhakti* is knowledge, we have to know our enemies, our *anarthas*. So the first step is to be aware of them, when they are surfacing. You have to know your enemies before you deal with them. But if *bhakti* is so powerful as you were explaining, is it necessary to observe these *anarthas* or can one just engage in positive devotional service?

**ANSWER:** On the path of devotion, at the beginning, one gives up one's separate existence and takes complete shelter, surrendering oneself and whatever one possesses. Therefore there is no possibility of *anarthas* here.

*Anarthas* come because of independence, and that is on the path of *yoga*, *jñāna*, or *karma*, where the person wants either some material enjoyment or liberation. Because he desires some *bhukti* (enjoyment) or *mukti* (liberation), he keeps his separate existence, and because he keeps his separate existence, there are *anarthas*. Then he has to understand and know what all the *anarthas* are and then there is a whole process about how to get rid of them.

But in *bhakti* this is not the case, because here the person does not want *bhukti* or *mukti*. He has no other desire except service. That being the case, the *anarthas* do not come. Otherwise, if the *anarthas* are there, then you have to do *sādhana* to remove them, and then you become so much absorbed in the *sādhana* that you forget what the *sādhya*, or the goal, is. The *sādhana* itself will become complicated, you have to do *pratyāhāra*, control the senses, and follow the rules, and then ultimately you have no time for the real goal.

That is why it is said that *yoga* and *jñāna* cannot give the result themselves without the aid of *bhakti*. Nobody can become a true *yogī* or *jñānī*, because they are enrolled in the whole process of doing *sādhana* only. They will not be able to get out of it, so they have to follow the process of becoming situated in *sattva*. And what is the *sattva-guṇa*? This itself is not fixed. *Sattva-guṇa* is also not pure, and it is always unstable. You never know when it will be taken over by *rajo-guṇa* or *tamo-guṇa*.

The path of *bhakti* must be understood without mixing it with the path of *yoga*, etc., People are unable to understand that *bhakti* is a separate path, because they have been mixing it with other paths. It is not something that should be mixed with the path of *yoga* or *jñāna*. *Bhakti* is beyond the *guṇas*. Therefore it is said, *jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam* (pure devotion is without any covering of *karma* and *jñāna*).

One becomes a devotee after becoming liberated. Liberation is the first point. Not that after becoming a devotee one becomes liberated, because a *bhakta*, or devotee, does not have any other *sprhā*, desire.

CC Madhya 19.176 says:

*bhukti-mukti-sprhā yāvat  
piśācī hṛdi vartate  
tāvad bhakti-sukhasyātra  
katham abhyudayo bhavet*

“How can the happiness of *bhakti* arise when the witch of desire to enjoy the material world and the desire to become liberated from material bondage remain within the heart?”

As long as there are *sprhās*, or desires, in the heart, how can *bhakti* take its seat in the heart? *Bhakti* does not tolerate anything else next to her. She wants exclusive rights.

Right from the beginning, a *bhakta* is liberated. When he is liberated, where is the possibility of any *anarthas* coming here? *Anarthas* come because of desires. If there are no desires to begin with, then there are no *anarthas*. On the path of *jñāna*, *karma*, or *yoga*, however, there are desires.

As long as this *piśācī*, the witch of the desire for *bhukti* or *mukti* is in the heart, *bhakti* cannot come and sit there, because it is a dirty place. *Bhakti* does not come and sit next to a witch. First you have to throw her out.

**QUESTION:** But how can we become free from material desires before the desire for *bhakti* arises? In my understanding, if there is a glass of water, first the water is poured in and then the air comes out, not that the air comes out and then the water is filled in.

**ANSWER:** It happens simultaneously. When you pour in the water, the air leaves.

## 8. Anger

**QUESTION:** Can we use anger in the service of Kṛṣṇa or does it have to be given up?

**ANSWER:** Anger means intense desire to get rid of something. This is the consciousness behind anger. If there is some object or person you become angry upon, you want to remove that from your path or presence. Anger is used against those who are envious of Bhagavān or His devotees, or those who criticize them or the guru. Anger may be exhibited towards them.

**QUESTION:** This means that it is proper to exhibit anger in these cases?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

## 9. Arts and Culture

**QUESTION:** Is there some difference between the cultural aspect or cultural creation of Kṛṣṇa and the culture of *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** Cultural creation is in *bhakti* also. The Gosvāmīs taught everything, including the cultural aspect of *bhakti*. They wrote plays, poetry, songs, and books on music. But materialistic people take that part and use it for business purposes. For example, there are *rāsa-līlā* groups, enacting Kṛṣṇa's pastimes on stage. What is their purpose? Their stage performance has nothing to do with *bhakti*. *Rāsa-līlā* performers are concerned that the crowd comes and they get money out of them. That is the only purpose. Of course, they will talk about devotion and all that because they have to say it. But what is the intention behind it? Only to make money. Similarly, there are *kīrtana* parties who charge money to do traditional *kīrtana*.

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**QUESTION:** How can a devotee appreciate something done by people who do not have a spiritual consciousness, like fine arts, etc.? Because we cannot deny that something is really beautiful, for example a composition of music or a nice statue. How should we see that?



ANSWER: The original purpose of arts is for the sake of Kṛṣṇa's service, whether it is music, dance, painting, architecture, designs, or *vastu-śāstra*, etc. As far as a devotee is concerned, if he himself is an artist, he does things in relation to Kṛṣṇa. He has no interest in things which are not related to Kṛṣṇa. And if he does something independently, it will deviate him, because then he develops independent pride that "I am a great musician, singer, painter, or whatever," and that will not be conducive for his devotional progress.

If those people who are not devotees, do artistic works that are considered good or beautiful, but their work has nothing to do with devotion, then from the devotional point of view, it has no value.

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QUESTION: When one appreciates that art, does that mean one will become attached?

ANSWER: Appreciation basically means that you like it, which means that you also want to be like that. Ultimately it is attachment at a subtle level.

Appreciation should not be done independent of Kṛṣṇa. You can think, "Kṛṣṇa has given them the intelligence to do such a nice work." Such appreciation is alright. But do not appreciate the person independent of Kṛṣṇa because this will deviate you.

QUESTION: What about taking lessons from good but materialistic artists?

ANSWER: You can learn it, if you want to use it properly in Kṛṣṇa's service. A non-perfected devotee can write, paint, etc., with material and spiritual knowledge.

QUESTION: Should a non-perfected devotee also strive to write novels, make sculptures, paintings, etc.?

ANSWER: In *bhakti* everything is utilized, whether it is art, science, construction, human protection, animal protection, culinary arts, dance, drama, poetry, prose, etc. Everything can be used, because this path is all-comprehensive, especially when it is connected with the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The only thing is that you should understand the philosophy. Otherwise, as confirmed by Prahlāda Mahārāja (SB 7.9.46), when you are independent minded and frivolous, it all ends up in business, entertainment, or sex. It should

be done in a surrendered mood and with proper knowledge. Like when you are playing music or writing poetry, you must have a devotional mood and also proper knowledge.

Everything that is being done is for the sake of Bhagavān. Everything should be done with proper training, experience, and guidance.

*Uttama-bhakti* is the only path that is auspicious. All the other paths are inauspicious because they create a separatist mentality. The path of *uttama-bhakti* encompasses all philosophies, all arts, science, culture, etc. It brings cooperation among human beings so that they can live peacefully without any cheating, exploitation, or violence towards others. This path, if followed, can bring happiness and fearlessness. This is the most wonderful process, which was propagated by Śrī Caitanya and His followers. It can bring happiness, prosperity, and peace in society. There is no need to be unnecessarily renounced or austere. But there has to be proper training, oneness of the heart, and surrender to one's guru. But I have personally noticed how people misuse this.

**QUESTION:** When it is said that, "One should be properly trained," does this mean that one should practice *bhakti* in the Vedic style, or can it be in the style of the culture wherever one is situated?

**ANSWER:** There is no limitation that it has to be only in Indian style. In *bhakti* there is no closed mindedness like this. But it should be done properly; in every culture there is a known fact what is proper or acceptable.

In *Govinda-līlāmṛta* everything is included, whether it is painting, singing, dancing, constructing temples, making garlands, decoration, ornaments, dressing, culinary arts, and they are all related to the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. All the available knowledge is to be used in the service of Bhagavān, and it should be done with the proper mood, education, and guidance.

## 10. Asuras (Anti-gods)

**QUESTION:** Are the demons in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* representing different *anarthas*?

**ANSWER:** The main reason Kṛṣṇa comes on earth is that He wants to establish *dharma*—*dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya* (Gītā 4.8)—and

annihilate the *asuras*. This is what He does. People may explain these *asuras* as *anarthas*, but the primary meaning is that which Kṛṣṇa has spoken in this verse—that He comes to establish *dharma*, which means discipline.

*Asuras* are those who are not following discipline and who create disturbance. Their major attack is on *brāhmaṇas*, which means on education. That is why they destroy the sacrifice and trouble or kill the *brāhmaṇas*, because once education is destroyed, they can rule people. Illiterate people are easy to exploit, whereas you can't fool educated people easily. Therefore Kṛṣṇa kills the *asuras*, because it is not possible to educate them. Instead of making any effort to try to talk to them, preach to them, or give them some education, He removes them, so that other people can follow His instructions peacefully. That is the real meaning of killing the *asuras*, whether it is Kāmsa or others.

QUESTION: So it is not allegoric that this demon represents this *anartha*?

ANSWER: If it is allegoric it does not mean that it is not real. Allegoric means when something does not exist the way it is described. These are all Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and they should not be taken as merely allegorical.

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QUESTION: Are the demons in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* always antagonistic?

ANSWER: They are always antagonistic; that is their mood. Whenever Kṛṣṇa wants them, they participate in His pastimes, otherwise they remain like statues in His abode. When Kṛṣṇa wants to enjoy His *vīra rasa*, meaning chivalry or fighting, then He activates them and they participate in His *līlā*.

Devotees, however, are never antagonistic to Bhagavān. So these *asuras* are not devotees but they are also associates.

Bhagavān has everything in Him. He has opposite qualities. He can accommodate everything without any conflict. There is no problem for Him. In His pastimes with these *asuras*, He manifests some of His qualities which are not manifest otherwise. When there is opposition, then you manifest some extra qualities. But when there is no opposition, then a certain character is not manifested.

## 11. Ātmā (the Self)

**QUESTION:** How can we explain to people the “doership” of the soul although it is different from the body?

**ANSWER:** In the West, people have difficulty in understanding just what the self is. Because there are many philosophers saying that the mind is the self or that the body is the self.

The prime meaning of *ātmā* is *īśvara* (regulator), all-pervading, the protector of everyone. We are attached to our body because we are attached to our *ātmā*, which is part of the supreme *ātmā*, or Paramātmā. Death means separation of the self from the body.

When, because of sickness, old age, or some accident, the body becomes useless for fulfilling the desires of the self, then the self is pushed out of the body by its *karma* and therefore the self desires a new body. Then one gets a new birth.

Consciousness is a distinct property of the self. The body without the self is dead. The attachment to body is only because of the presence of the self in it. Nobody loves a dead body.

There is the description in the Tenth Canto how Kṛṣṇa Himself became the calves and the cowherd boys, and how the *vraja-vāsīs* liked them more than their original children. This shows that although we like our body and children, the attachment to Kṛṣṇa is more intense, because He is the supreme *Ātmā*.

In deep sleep you have some experience of *ātmā*. When you wake up, you say, “I slept happily.” Only someone who has experienced the happiness can speak about its experience. In deep sleep, there is no function of the mind and senses, even the scientists agree to that. If there is no *ātmā*, then who is experiencing the satisfaction of good sleep? And who remembers it upon awakening? Only the one who experiences it can remember it.

The presence of *ātmā* makes the material body active. The self is like a driver who is sitting in a car, which can be compared to the body. One can get a good car or a bad one according to one's economic situation. After he gets the car, he is limited by the type of car. If it is a sports car, he can drive at a high speed, but if the car is old and rickety, he cannot. Similarly, one gets a body according to one's past *karma*. Just as it is the car that moves, not the driver or passenger sitting in it, similarly an action happens in the body only.



The self is a witness. But the doership is happening because of the presence of the self. If there is an accident, it's not the car that gets the reaction for the action; it's the driver. The car acts only because the driver sits in it and controls it.

Ātmā is the object of the ego. The ego is related to the self. Only by misidentifying oneself with the body, the ego is projected into the material body. The whole law of *karma* works on the level of this misidentification.

**QUESTION:** The soul and the body do not have any contact with each other. How then is the soul spread throughout the body?

**ANSWER:** Just as a lamp, which is situated in one place, distributes its light in a room, in the same way *ātmā*, which is also situated in one place, the heart, distributes its energy from there. Powerful things can spread their power without actually contacting the objects. There is a special kind of sandalwood, called *haricandana*. If you put this *haricandana* on one part of the body, the whole body gets cooled. Like in the case of a magnet which moves a piece of iron without contacting it. Similarly, *ātmā* moves the body, although not in contact with it. Just as a magnet has a magnetic field around it, the *ātmā* has a field of consciousness around it. This field becomes delimited by the physical body possessed by the *ātmā*.

There are different philosophies of *ātmā*. The Jains, for example, say that *ātmā* has the same size as the body in which it is situated. In the case of an elephant, it has the size of an elephant. This is not a proper concept of the *ātmā*. Otherwise, how can the *ātmā* of an elephant fit into the body of a mouse in its next life? Then you have to accept that *ātmā* undergoes transformations like matter. The reality, however, is that *ātmā* does not undergo transformations. That is its basic distinction from matter.

We identify wrongly with the body as "I," but when a part of our body is diseased, we are even willing to sacrifice it by surgery to avoid death. So what part of the body is then the real "I"? Is the amputated part also the "I"? We do not feel that the "I" has decreased after a bodily limb is amputated.

When we take *dīkṣā*, we identify with the real "I," the pure self, as part of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, after *dīkṣā*, we are liberated, free from *karma*, because now the part serves the whole. At the time of *dīkṣā* we make the resolve, *saṅkalpa*, to act according to the principle, "I belong to Kṛṣṇa, and my duty is to serve Him."

Spiritual body means to consider oneself purely as a servant of Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: Are there spirit souls in inert matter, like stones?

ANSWER: *Ātmās* are everywhere.

## 12. Avatāras

QUESTION: There are two types of *āveśa-avatāras*: The first is that a particular *ātmā* is empowered by Bhagavān, and the other one is that Bhagavān Himself enters into an *ātmā*. How is that possible?

ANSWER: The *āveśa-avatāras*, in whom Bhagavān enters, have the ego, "I am Bhagavān" to give instructions to people. For example, there is one *sūtra* in Vedānta (1.1.30), which is a statement of the Upaniṣads about the sage Vāmadeva. This sage said, "I became Manu, I became the sun, I became the moon." It means that he is everyone. He has not really become them, it is just to give instructions to people. For example, if somebody is working for the government and he says, "I am the government," or "I belong to the government," it means that he is just a representative. But people may also respect him because he is a representative. An ambassador who comes from another country is treated like the head of the state, although he is not. He is immune to any criminal action or police action. He cannot be put in jail; he cannot be called to the court. He has the same facilities just like any head of the state. *Āveśa-avatāras* act similarly to give instructions to people. They can say "surrender to God," or they can say "surrender to me." It is just to instruct people.

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QUESTION: Is the pilgrimage place Ahovalam in South India the original place where Nṛsiṃhadeva appeared, because in the *Bhāgavatam* it is stated that He appeared on the heavenly planets?

ANSWER: Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva appears in different *kalpas* in different places. Just as in the *Bhāgavatam*, the Varāha description is not of just one Varāha. It is of different Varāhas, although they are described as if they were one.

QUESTION: That means that Nṛsimhadeva appeared in Ahovalam?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: And sometimes He appears on the heavenly planets in another *kalpa*?

ANSWER: Yes.

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QUESTION: I read that the *yuga-avatāra* for Kaliyuga is appearing in every Kaliyuga, but Caitanya Mahāprabhu appears only once in a day of Brahmā, so who are these other Kaliyuga *avatāras*?

ANSWER: There is no specific mention of them. When Kṛṣṇa comes, then in the following *yuga* Caitanya Mahāprabhu appears. Kṛṣṇa also does not come in every *Dvāparayuga*. Other *avātāras* come, but which ones come is not stated.

### 13. Āyurveda

QUESTION: I heard that Āyurveda is an Upaveda of *Atharva Veda*, whereas others say that it is an Upaveda of *R̥g Veda*. Which is true?

ANSWER: Āyurveda is an Upaveda of *Atharva Veda*.

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QUESTION: In the oldest Āyurveda-*śāstras*, *Caraka-saṁhitā* and *Suśruta-saṁhitā*, for certain diseases there are recommendations to eat meat products. Was this in the beginning in these *śāstras*? Did the original Āyurveda, which is not available now, also have these instructions?

ANSWER: The original Āyurveda did not have these instructions.

There are two types of people; divine and asuric, based upon the three *guṇas*, *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*. They all have different food, and this is all described in the scriptures. Just like in *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa also talks about three types of food. Depending upon whether people are in *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*, they like the corresponding type of food. Sometimes humanity is more in *sattva*-

*guṇa* and they follow the scriptural injunctions, but when they are not in *sattva*, they follow their own desires; their own mind. Therefore, all types of descriptions are found and there are all types of *śāstra*. It depends on us whether we want to follow the discipline set up by Bhagavān or whether we do not want to follow it.

For instance, it is recommended that Vaiṣṇavas should fast on Ekādaśī, but this has become such a big problem. People ask so many questions as to whether they can eat this or that, or how much. If a person becomes sick and the doctor says, "Do not eat!" then he will follow the doctor's instructions and not ask any questions. But when it comes to following some religious principle, then it becomes such a problem. There are some people who say that, "On Ekādaśī day, the woman has to eat meat, otherwise her husband will die." In this way, so many types of belief are there.

You have to follow the proper discipline if you want to make proper advancement.

**QUESTION:** Did the original Āyurveda, which was given by Dhanvantari, also have statements like that about eating meat?

**ANSWER:** All this was added later on, because of people's requirements.

**QUESTION:** So these recommendations were not in the original Āyurveda?

**ANSWER:** No, they were not. Nobody is recommending it. Even Caraka is not recommending that you eat meat. Kṛṣṇa describes that there are three types of food. He does not say, "You eat this or you eat that." He is not recommending that you eat *tāmasika* food. He is just describing that *tāmasika* food has such and such qualities, and *rājasika* food has such and such qualities. Where did He say that one should eat this?

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**QUESTION:** In our Āyurveda classes we heard from our Āyurvedic teacher that you have told him that real healing takes place from soul to soul. Could you explain what this really means?

**ANSWER:** I did not say it like that. What you are saying does not even make sense to me. What is the healing from soul to soul? The soul is not sick like the body. But the medical science is given as an example to understand the spiritual science. There is a similarity between the two. Just as the body becomes sick, in the same way



there is a sickness called *bhava-roga*, the disease of material existence. Just as in the medical science, the sick person approaches a doctor and has full faith in him. The doctor analyzes his disease and gives him medicine. Then the person absolutely follows the instruction of the doctor. A good patient follows the doctor properly, he does what the doctor says, avoids what the doctor tells him not to do, and takes the medicine in the way the doctor has prescribed. The doctor also has to be qualified, which means he has studied medical science properly. He has taken practical knowledge from his teacher and knows how a particular medicine works, and then he gives the medicine. So in the medical treatment, there is the person who is sick, there is the diagnosis and there is medicine that is given. There are prohibitions and prescriptions and the patient also has to have complete faith in the doctor. If you have faith neither in the doctor nor in the medicine, then it will not work. You will not follow it.

Spiritual life is also like that. The guru is like a doctor who cures the disease of material bondage. He analyzes the disease and prescribes you the process. And he also tells you about those things that should be avoided. You also have to have complete faith in him. And the guru is one who has also studied the scriptures, is realized in them, has a proper understanding, and can diagnose the disease.

You actually place your life in the hands of the doctor. You do not know what he is giving you. You do not know how this medicine is going to work, yet you follow what he says, although the medicine may kill you.

In the same way, you should follow the instructions of the guru and then you become free from the disease of material existence. In that sense, to understand spiritual life, this example of medical treatment is given, otherwise it is difficult to understand spiritual life. There is a one to one correspondence. The principle that is followed in the medical science is also followed in spiritual life.

## 14. Bhagavad Gītā

**QUESTION:** In his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Svāmījī is glorifying the *Gītā* and says that it is not necessary to study any other book. Isn't the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* the supreme literature for Vaiṣṇavas?

**ANSWER:** *Bhagavad Gītā* is a book for beginners, it is an introduction. It teaches, "You are not the body, but the soul." There is also talk about *bhakti*.

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto  
mad-yājī mām namaskuru  
mām evaiśyasi yuktvaivam  
ātmānam mat-parāyaṇaḥ*

“Fix your mind on Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and pay obeisance to Me. Thus linked with Me and being devoted to Me, you will attain Me alone.” (Gītā 9.34)

All this is there in the *Gītā* so that people become interested in studying the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* later on. The *Gītā* is a small booklet. Because people are lazy and do not want to read and study big books, they can first start with *Bhagavad Gītā*. His glorification is not keeping the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in mind. Let a common man at least study the *Gītā*. That is the purpose of his glorification. It is not to minimize the greatness of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

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**QUESTION:** Is it a spiritual emotion, a spiritual feeling, when a *sādhaka* drinks water, thinking—as it says in the *Bhagavad Gītā* 7.8, “I am the taste in water”—that taste is Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** The example that you gave is from *Bhagavad Gītā*, and *Bhagavad Gītā* is not focusing on pure *bhakti*. It is a book for materialistic people to come to spiritual life. It is for those who have no idea about the self or anything beyond the body.

Arjuna is the representative of such an ignorant person, and he was engrossed in his own attachments. So how to make him do his duty? This is the focus of the *Gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa gave a good preaching lecture, basically just to change Arjuna's mind and divert his attention. He said so many things like, “You are such a great person, if you do not fight, people will criticize you. As a *kṣatriya*, your job is to fight. In between, He also spoke philosophy, but there is no experience gained by Arjuna from that. Therefore even at the end, Kṛṣṇa said, “If you want to fight, you fight. Do whatever you want to do. I told you whatever I wanted to say.” In the beginning, Arjuna was giving so much logic about how he should not fight. Then he was saying, “I am confused, You are my teacher, I will do what You want me to do,” and then he said, “I will not fight.” This is how people in general behave. They are not resolute in their mind. They have a fickle mind which they like to follow. If you get a worker to do some job and you become very strict with him, he will run away. Kṛṣṇa had a stick in His hand, and

He could just have flogged Arjuna, but then Arjuna would have run away. He is just trying to persuade him to do the job. So where is the question of experience or anything? It has nothing to do with *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Arjuna couldn't experience that the taste of water is Kṛṣṇa. It is just to elevate his consciousness. When you are too absorbed in your bodily consciousness, then you cannot listen to any other person, because your mind is deviated by that attachment. That is what was happening to Arjuna. So Kṛṣṇa gave him some knowledge: "You are not this body, but the *ātmā*." He also wanted to make him understand that there is somebody above him who is a higher authority. There is God who is the controller of everything and all-pervading. He wanted to instill some fear in Arjuna so that he would in turn respect God, and then he could work.

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**QUESTION:** Is it possible to practice *vaidhī-bhakti* without *śāstrīya-śraddhā* (faith based upon scripture)?

**ANSWER:** How can it be *vaidhī*? *Vaidhī* means following *vidhi* (injunctions) and *vidhi* comes from *śāstra*.

**QUESTION:** But you were explaining that this *Gītā*-verse, *api cet su-durācāro*, is applied only to a person who does not have *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, but how can one be fixed in *bhakti* without having *śāstrīya-śraddhā*?

*api cet su-durācāro  
bhajate mām ananya-bhāk  
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ  
samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

"Even if a very ill-behaved person worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should indeed be regarded as holy, for he has made the right resolution." (*Gītā* 9.30)

**ANSWER:** People are doing so many things. In India, if somebody is worshipping Śiva, they are fixed in worshipping Śiva. They do not even go to a temple of Viṣṇu. It is not that they have heard *śāstra* or have any *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. Or like some Muslims, who are killing in the name of *jihad*. They were born like that. *Bhagavad Gītā* is explaining three types of *śraddhā* based upon the *guṇas* of nature.

Material *śraddhā* can be very strong. Previously when a girl married a boy, she surrendered herself completely. After walking seven times around the fire at the marriage ceremony, she accepted the boy as her husband, and was completely surrendered to him



for rest of her life. Suppose the husband died 5 minutes after the marriage ceremony, she would not marry a second time. She would be that surrendered. There have been many cases like this in real life. At present it will be hard for you to believe this or even understand the mind-set of a traditional wife.

In Sanskrit there is no word for divorce. This means previously such a thing did not exist, not even the thought of divorce existed. There is a history of surrendered people in former times. In the West you cannot understand this, because at present we do not have examples like this anymore. The *śraddhā* of a wife in her husband is material, yet it was very strong.

Similarly, in India there are many people who are worshipping Viṣṇu with material *śraddhā*, just because it is the family deity. But this *śraddhā* can also be very strong. The verse *api cet su-durācāro* is meant for these kinds of people.

This verse is not describing devotees with *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. A devotee with *śāstrīya-śraddhā* is never *su-durācārah*, a debauchee, what to speak of a *rāgānugā* devotee. *Śāstrīya-śraddhā* and *su-durācāra* cannot be found in the same person.

There are verses in the scriptures just to show the power of *bhakti*. This verse is one of them. There is not even the theoretical case that a person with *śāstrīya-śraddhā* or a *rāgānugā* devotee would act *su-durācāra* in practice. This never happens. This verse just shows the power of *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** How can a devotee who is worshipping Kṛṣṇa be *su-durācāra*?

**ANSWER:** These two things do not go together. If somebody is a one-pointed or an unalloyed devotee of Bhagavān, as the verse says, he cannot be *su-durācāra*, or ill-behaved. But the verse, therefore, says, *api cet*, "even if." Considering the theoretical possibility: Even if it happens, although it will not happen, but if it would happen, then he should be considered as a *sādhū*.

Some people explain this verse wrongly. They say that if somebody is a devotee, he is given a license to behave wrongly. But that is not the intention of the verse. Because the verse is saying, *sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ*, that he should be known as a *sādhū*. Why? Because *samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*, his intelligence is not wavering, but is one-pointed in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, it is fixed.



In a sentence there is the subject and the predicate, or you have something which is known to you, and then some injunction is given. For example: You say that Rāma should be respected. That means, Rāma is known to you, and this is the subject, and it is ordained that you should give him respect. This is called *vidheya*, or that which is not known to you—which you should do.

The verse is not saying that you should do *su-durācāra*—that is not the *vidheya*. The injunction of the verse is that he should be known as a *sādhū*. And why is he to be known as a *sādhū*? Not because he is doing *su-durācāra*, but because his intelligence is fixed in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, he is *ananya-bhāk*. *Ananya-bhāk* means “not worshipping anybody else”—only Kṛṣṇa. So if there is somebody who has his intelligence fixed like this, then he is called a *sādhū*. So basically the verse is explaining the criteria for someone to be a *sādhū*, but it is not instructing a person that a *sādhū* can be *su-durācāra*. That is not the intention of the verse, because the injunction is in *mantavyaḥ*, “he should be regarded as,” which is the imperative case. The injunction is not given that he can or should be *su-durācāra* or ill behaved. Any understanding like that is wrong.

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**QUESTION:** If someone has attachment [to Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu] but does not follow *śāstra*, is he still considered a Vaiṣṇava?

**ANSWER:** Such a person is called a Vaiṣṇava in the social sense, but not in the transcendental sense. When a topic comes up, you need to see the context. Whether somebody is attached or not, why would he not follow *śāstra*? It is naturally expected that such a person would follow *śāstra*. Why would he not do it? But even if such a case existed, Kṛṣṇa Himself spoke this verse:

*api cet su-durācāro  
bhajate mām ananya-bhāk  
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ  
samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

“Even if a very ill-behaved person worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should indeed be regarded as holy, for he has made the right resolution.” (Gītā 9.30)

You always have to see the context. Vaiṣṇava means someone who worships Viṣṇu and that also means that he follows *śāstra*, which are the words of Viṣṇu. Ultimately there is no difference between guru, *śāstra*, and Viṣṇu. If somebody is a devotee of Śiva, then he

will follow what Śiva says. Similarly, if one worships Viṣṇu he/she should also follow what Viṣṇu says, i.e., *śāstra*. Otherwise, how is it possible that someone is devoted to guru and Kṛṣṇa, but he does not follow what they say? What then is the meaning of being a worshiper of Viṣṇu or having a guru?

## 15. Bhakti—Uttama-bhakti, Rāgānugā-bhakti

QUESTION: Mahārāja mentioned that the *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam* verse (BRS 1.1.11) is the essence of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Could he explain this verse further?

ANSWER:

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam  
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam  
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-  
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

“The highest *bhakti* is defined as continuous service directed favorably towards Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. It must be devoid of all material desires and not covered by monistic philosophy and fruitive action.”

This verse explains *uttama-bhakti*, which is *rāgānugā-bhakti*. To understand *rāgānugā-bhakti*, first you have to know what is *rāgātmikā*. The definition of *rāgātmikā* is given in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*iṣṭe svārasikī rāgaḥ paramāviṣṭatā bhavet  
tanmayī yā bhaved bhaktiḥ sā'tra rāgātmikoditā*

“The natural complete absorption of the mind in the worshipable deity of one’s liking is called *rāga*. That absorbing devotion is described as *rāgātmikā bhakti*.” (BRS 1.2.272)

The devotees in Vraja are completely absorbed in the object of their love. *Svārasikī* means “natural,” *paramāviṣṭatā* means “full absorption with no scope of anything else.”

When you very deeply desire something, you become absorbed in it. Absorption in *bhakti* is like that. This is the mood of the *vraja-vāsīs*, and the devotion executed by them is called *rāgātmikā*.

If a person develops greed to acquire this *bhāva*, he is called *adhikārī*, or qualified for this *bhāva*. It cannot happen just because a person follows certain rules or thinks a little about it. There has to be greed. Greed means you have intense desire and you are really after it. When a person becomes desirous like that, he becomes qualified for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Otherwise, in this material body there is no possibility of attaining *bhakti*. We are born from sex life and that is our primary *bhāva* because of association with this body. The body is created from sex life and that is the continuous yearning of the body. And there is no way that one can become free from it, no matter what one does. The only way to become free is through *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* will not come by itself or by doing any other activity. It comes only by the grace of a devotee.

In this verse, *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, *jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*, and *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam* are the three things which have to be understood.

*Ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*: *anukūla* means to perform an activity for the pleasure of the person (Kṛṣṇa) for whose sake you are doing the activity. It is not that you perform some action because you like to do it. Service is not the same as work. There is a difference between service and work. Work means there is no feeling of favorableness or desire to please. You do it regardless of whether the other person likes it or not. Once the work is finished, you are happy. That is not service.

In service there is the feeling or the mood of *anukūla*, doing action which is favorable to the other person. That means the other person should like it, and when you do that, it gives you satisfaction, because your mood is to please the object of your service.

And how is this service to be done? *Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. *Anuśīlanam* does not restrict one to a particular activity, although generally we hear about *bhakti* in the form of hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. *Uttamā-bhakti* involves everything. It is not that you do it for a certain number of hours a day and then you stop. It is a complete lifestyle. So *anuśīlanam* refers to all the activities one can perform. And all the time, whether one is sleeping, in wakeful state, or one is in deep sleep. Under all circumstances one performs *anuśīlanam* to Kṛṣṇa. It means performing activities only for His sake and for His pleasure. So it involves everything, whether directly related to His

service or indirectly related. You also have to maintain your own body, and that should not be independent of *uttama-bhakti*.

*Anuśīlanam* (activities) are of two types: Either you accept or you reject something. Whenever you perform an action, you are accepting and rejecting something. You are accepting what you are doing, and naturally there are other things or activities that you are simultaneously rejecting. Whatever you are accepting or rejecting, there has to be *ānukūlya*, or a sense of pleasing Kṛṣṇa. If you accept something, it has to be *ānukūlya* and if you reject something, it also has to be *ānukūlya*, which means favorable for the sake of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. *Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam* means for Kṛṣṇa or His associates or objects which belong to Him; both are included in it. This means that you do that which gives Him satisfaction and pleasure. Your action is such that it is really pleasing to His heart, not that He is forced to say "Thank you."

*Anyābhilāṣitā* means that there should be no other motive involved in the service. Whenever a person performs some work, he always desires something out of it. There is always some desire for something in return. And even if he does not desire something, then at least he desires, "Let this work be finished." Then he feels happy because the work is finished; that is the desire of *mokṣa*, *mukti*. You are thinking, "It is over, now I am free." That is also *anyābhilāṣa*, meaning you are not really interested in the work, but your interest is to finish it and be free to do something else for yourself. When you do not like the work, you want to finish it quickly and move on. You do not relish doing it.

Of course, you have to finish the work, but the goal is not that it is finished, and you are relieved of the burden. That is not *uttama-bhakti*.

In *uttama-bhakti* you have to do *ānukūlya*. The time it takes is not the point. The concern is whether or not the service is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa or guru. The motive behind it is that the person served has to be pleased with it. Otherwise, from the action you desire *mokṣa* or *bhoga*. That means you perform the activity and then you want to enjoy the result—here, in your next life, or whenever. Or you want to finish performing the action because after that you have another action to perform. Your mind is set on the result, not on the action of service. But in *bhakti* you perform one action and after that you perform another action of devotion.



So *anyābhilāṣitā* means that there is no other desire except one, and that is the desire to do service. And when the desire is to do service, then there is no thought such as, "Let me finish it quickly, and then I am free." There is service followed by more service. And this is what absorption is all about.

Another important point which has to be noticed in the word *anyābhilāṣitā* is the suffix *tā*. This *tā* means that besides not having any other desire, you actually have freedom from desires. Your mood is absolute desirelessness. Because it is possible that sometimes you may not desire something, but the *saṁskāras* are there; the seed of the desires is there inside you. You have the desire to eat a particular kind of food, so you get it and eat it. Right after that you do not want it, even if somebody gives it to you. But after some time, you may want to have it again. You may not desire it for a few hours or maybe a few days, but after a while, you may desire it. That is not *anyābhilāṣitā*.

When a person falls sick, he usually loses his appetite for certain foods. But that does not mean that one cannot have the desire for that food in the future. Therefore, Rūpa Gosvāmī used the word *anyābhilāṣitā* in the definition of *bhakti*, meaning that there is no *saṁskāra* left inside you that could cause you to desire any more. Only if the *saṁskāra* is not there, it is guaranteed that you will not desire it. Otherwise, you can desire even after 1000 years. For example, Saubhari Muni suddenly got the desire to get married. If somebody had been watching him for a long time, he might have thought, "Oh, he is completely free from sex desire." But even though he was desireless for a long period, the desire came again, because he had the latent *saṁskāra* in his heart. That means it is not *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnya*, which is the second characteristic of *uttama-bhakti*.

The third characteristic is *jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*; performing action. Action has to be performed, but you should not have any hidden agenda behind that action.

The *gopīs* do only what is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. If you see their lifestyle, you realize they are ordinary, normal people. They are not living in some *āśrama*, but they are in family life. And in family life they have various duties to perform. They have not given them up. People ask, "Do we have to respect our parents?" The *gopīs* respect everybody.

They take care of their husbands, other relatives, and children, but their minds are completely absorbed in doing favorable service to Kṛṣṇa. In the same way, one has to perform activities with no desires for anything, such as, "I want to become liberated." Liberation is basically committing suicide. Generally, the desire to be liberated is latent in us, and it is very strong.

Either we want to enjoy or we do not want to work. These are the two prominent tendencies we possess. If we want to perform some action and then enjoy the results of our actions, that is called *bhukti*. If we think, "I should not have to do anything, let somebody else do it," then that is called *mukti* or liberation. Liberation means, "I am free to do what my mind wants, not what Kṛṣṇa or guru wants." With such a mentality, one cannot perform devotion or service.

When acts are performed for the sake of Kṛṣṇa without these two desires, it is called *uttama-bhakti*. When one understands that Vraja devotees have *rāga* naturally, which is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti*, one develops a very intense desire to acquire that. Then one is qualified to execute *uttama-bhakti*.

One has to learn it from one's guru. How is it done? You have to remember Kṛṣṇa, *kṛṣṇa-smaraṇam*, and then serve the *sādhū*, which means the guru. You should live in Vraja, either physically or through your mind. That means all the time, continuously, twenty four hours a day. When you are in that mood only, that is called *uttama-bhakti*.

If a person has such a mood, then naturally there is no scope for any other problems which other people are facing due to lack of purification of the heart, for instance, lust and all other vices. There is no other process which can purify the heart. People try to do *śuddhi* or purification, but nothing happens. Instead of all this purification, the desires persist. And material desires will not go away unless one performs *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*, and that *anuśīlanam* has to be done without any motive. You can also do *anuśīlanam* with the intention, "Let me please this person, so that I can get something from him," but this is not *uttama-bhakti*.

This *uttama-bhakti* is the highest thing and it is very difficult to understand, because there is no other experience of such a thing in the material world.

This is depicted in SB 10.14.35 in the *brahma-vimohana-līlā*. Brahmā witnessed the people in Vraja, and how they were completely

dedicated. They had no motives and were not caring for their relatives, their friends, their wealth, and whatever else people usually bother about. They acted only for the sake of Kṛṣṇa and not for anything else. When Brahmā saw this, even he became bewildered. He understood that Kṛṣṇa gave Himself even to Pūtānā, just because she dressed like a gopī. So what about those who are actually gopīs? They are not only dressed like a gopī but are fully and completely dedicated to Him. Brahmā was wondering what Kṛṣṇa is going to give them, because there is nothing higher than Kṛṣṇa and He has given Himself even to Pūtānā, who came to poison Him in the garb of a gopī, so what will He give to them? It cannot just be Him, it must be something higher than Him. So Brahmā said, "Even my intelligence is confused."

Even a person such as Brahmā cannot comprehend *uttama-bhakti*—how these people of Vraja can be so dedicated to Kṛṣṇa.

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**QUESTION:** What does favorable service (*ānukūlya*) really mean?

**ANSWER:** The basic principle is one's consciousness while doing service. People do service in the material world also. But their motive is different; they want to gain something for themselves. If one wants to do *ānukūlya*, favorable service, then one has to have God consciousness, whatever service one is doing. If one has faith in devotion, he is not going to cheat and have some other motive. If he is serving the guru, he has to think, "The guru is also my God," or "If I am serving the cows, then they are also gods, or worshipable." Only then can we have the proper consciousness, otherwise whatever we will do, we will try to gain something out of it.

For example, people who have a hidden motive try to get some profit even if they are given some money to buy something for the temple. Either they will get a commission from a shopkeeper or they will cheat with the bills and pocket some money. Or if they are worshipping the deity in the temple and there is a donation box, they have the tendency to get something out of it. If you do not work with God consciousness, you will also get the ego that, "I am doing so much," and then you want to control everybody. If you do service even for the guru, you think, "Now I can control him also. If I do not come, or if I do not do this, then he will be dependent on me." This type of feeling comes when one does not have God consciousness.



If one is performing service with God consciousness, however, that will lead one to favorable service. Favorable service is a matter of experience; one has to experience it oneself. And that experience will come if first one begins with cooperation and then works with this favorable feeling, not with the idea of controlling or gaining something material, including wealth, position, post, fame, or glorification. None of these motives should be there.

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**QUESTION:** Could Mahārāja explain verse SB 1.1.2, especially the term *dharmah projjhita-kaitava*?

**ANSWER:**

*dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām  
vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ tāpa-trayonmūlanam  
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kim vā parair īśvaraḥ  
sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*

“This beautiful *Bhāgavata* describes the supreme religion, free from all deceptive propensities, and practiced by saintly hearted people who are non-envious. The Absolute Reality which gives auspiciousness and uproots the threefold misery is to be known from here. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has been compiled by Vyāsa, so there is no need of any other literature. When a simple-hearted person desires to hear it, Bhagavān becomes arrested in the heart.”

The basis of cheating (*kaitava*) is immediate attachment to the material body, because it is not our own *svarūpa*. You become attached to the body, and then you act to get happiness through the body. *Dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* are manifestations of the cheating propensity. What about those who are not even following these four goals? Generally, people perform religious activity, *dharma*, so that they can gain something pleasurable in their next life. They do some austerity or charity in this life so that in the next life they will get some happiness, go to heaven, and live there. Just now people are going to Kumbhamelā, taking bath there in this cold season. Why are they doing that? Because they think by doing this, they can go to heaven. If you want to perform *dharma*, you need money, so then you have to earn money—*artha*. Once you get money, you will enjoy—*kāma*. And if you get frustrated with all this, then you want *mokṣa*—liberation.

All these are basically related to your body, whether it is *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, or *mokṣa*. It is not in relationship to your own self



whose constitutional position is to serve Bhagavān. Therefore, any of these activities, or anything which is related to these things, is all cheating. And to perform *bhakti*, one has to give them up. Without giving up all these, we cannot perform *bhakti*. Because in *bhakti* we have to do service without any motive and not desire anything for oneself. The thoughts and desires for some position, happiness, liberation, or to go to *Vaikuṇṭha*, are all forms of cheating. If you have any of these ideas, that is *anyābhilāṣa*, your real interest is not in *bhakti*. In that case, if you are doing *bhakti*, you are doing it only because you want something other than *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* or *parama dharma* means doing service only for the sake of doing service and not wanting anything in return. Unless your mood or motive is like this, there is no question of service.

Everything else is cheating, although this cheating may manifest in different ways. It may manifest as religious principles, like getting up early in the morning, doing *pūjā*, austerities, or going on *parikramā*. It can come in so many ways. But that is not *uttama-bhakti*, because your goal is something else, and that something else is ultimately related to this material body. You want happiness in this life, the next life, or liberation (eternal happiness). All these things are considered as *kaitava*, cheating.

*Parama dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo*, or the supreme *dharma* is that which is completely free from all these deceptions, subtle or gross. There is no trace of any of these things in *parama dharma*. That is *bhakti uttamā*.

Different people have defined *dharma* differently. The definition that is given by Kṛṣṇa Himself is *dharma mad-bhakti-kṛt prokta*. *Dharma* means performing devotional service unto Me.

*dharmo mad-bhakti-kṛt prokto  
jñānaṁ caikātmya-darśanam  
guṇesv asaṅgo vairāgyam  
aiśvaryaṁ cānimādayaḥ*

“Actual *dharma* is that which produces *bhakti*. Real *jñāna* is seeing *Paramātmā* everywhere. Real *vairāgya* is complete disinterest in sense objects. Real *aiśvarya* is acquisition of the *siddhis*.”  
(SB 11.19.27)

Other *dharmas* are refuted or denied by Kṛṣṇa.

Dharma is also defined as performing sacrifices or one's duties in *varṇāśrama-dharma*. *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* defines *dharma* as following the Vedic injunctions.

The *Bhāgavatam*, however, explains the supreme *dharma*. Kṛṣṇa says: "The real or actual *dharma* is to do service unto Me." Anything else is not *dharma*, and needs to be given up. Unless one does not give up that, one is not going to be established in one's own *dharma*.

QUESTION: Still, the last line (of S.B.1.1.2) is not clear to me, that the realization comes immediately?

ANSWER: It says that if one is qualified as described, then realization comes immediately. For example, I tell you, if you put a matchstick to dry grass, then it burns. Then you tell me, "I do not understand it." So then I ask, "What is it that you do not understand? You take a matchstick, touch it to the grass or a piece of paper, and it burns it." All this verse says is that if somebody is a *nirmatsara* (free from envy) and he desires to hear (*śuśrūṣubhiḥ*), then immediately Bhagavān becomes situated in his heart. If one gets *śraddhā*, which is the *svarūpa-śakti* of Bhagavān, then he is immediately determined to follow *bhakti*, and there are no *anarthas* for him anymore. He realizes Bhagavān.

QUESTION: At which stage are we? Because I still have *anarthas*, where am I?

ANSWER: That is described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the different stages of devotion, such as *sādhū-saṅga*, *bhajana-kriyā*, *anartha-nivṛtti*, etc.

What I was explaining is how it happens in *uttama-bhakti*. The *Bhāgavatam* is talking about *uttama-bhakti*, *dharmah projjhita-kaitava*. If somebody is *projjhita-kaitava*, free from any deceptive mentality, then there are no *anarthas* for him. *Anartha* means *kaitava*, cheating. Desiring things related to bodily pleasure is the basis of all cheating. If one is free from that, then there is no obstacle anymore.

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QUESTION: You said that the Gosvāmīs had to write the perfect philosophy because the other philosophies were not perfect. But I am wondering why Kṛṣṇa gave *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Uddhava Gītā* 5000 years ago, but he didn't give the same thing that Jīva Gosvāmī gave?

ANSWER: An object is offered according to its demand. At the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *varṇāśrama* was very prominent, people were very much absorbed in fruitive activities, and *mukti* was considered as the highest. People were also of a very envious nature; therefore there was fighting and exploitation of others. Kṛṣṇa had to fight for many years and kill such people, because there was no possibility of educating them. But nonetheless, He sowed the seed of *bhakti* and depicted it here in Vraja. But there were not many people who were willing to accept *bhakti* because of the prominence of the *varṇāśrama* system. Therefore, later on when the time was suitable, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came and propagated *bhakti*. It is said that if somebody is very depressed or very hungry and you give him a philosophical lecture, he will not be interested in it. If somebody is hungry, first he must eat some food, or else he will not be interested in hearing a philosophical lecture. At Kṛṣṇa's time people were very much interested in mundane fruitive activities and *bhakti* was not very appealing to them. The same situation was also in the other yugas, like Tretā- and Satyayuga. According to the proper circumstance, something was offered.

QUESTION: Why could people not accept *bhakti* at that time? Is consciousness more evolved now than 5000 years ago?

ANSWER: Human beings are not more evolved now. The truth is that they have become completely fallen and degraded. At that time (5000 years ago) people were highly evolved and therefore able to follow *varṇāśrama*, because in *varṇāśrama* you have to completely follow what *śāstra* says. They would not deviate or fall, nor were they corrupt. They followed the principles very meticulously. But now people have no qualification at all. This is the most fallen age and that is why it is called Kaliyuga. Everywhere you can witness people quarreling and fighting. Hypocrisy is all around. For the upliftment of such (Kaliyuga) people, you need the strongest solution, because nothing else works. Now people have absolutely no qualification, and they do not want to follow anything. They just want to do what their minds tell them to do. In these circumstances, they would not follow *varṇāśrama* or other paths such as *yoga*, which requires strict discipline. Therefore, the strongest process is being tried on them, with the intention that it may work for them.



QUESTION: When you speak of *bhakti-mārga*, the path of *bhakti*, how is this connected with *sādhana-bhakti* and *sādhya-bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** On the path of *bhakti*, there is no difference between the beginning and the end. It begins with *bhakti* and the end, or whatever you call it, is also *bhakti*. Although the division is made between *sādhana-bhakti* and *sādhya-bhakti*, the practicing stage and the perfected stage, it is still *bhakti*. It is all *bhakti*, because it is not anything material. Material means you perform certain material activities and you will achieve certain results.

By His grace, Bhagavān inspires one to come to this path, and if one surrenders to a guru, then by the guru's grace and by Kṛṣṇa's grace, one gets *śraddhā* on this path. When that opportunity is given, that itself is *bhakti*. So it begins from that point onwards.

*Bhakti* gives *bhakti*: That means if one does not misuse the opportunity, then one will progress and continue to perform *bhakti*. Right from the beginning, it is Bhagavān who gives it. He is the one who inspires it. He is the one who gives the association of the devotee, and if one takes that opportunity and acts favorably, then one progresses. So it is *bhakti* right from the beginning.

It is not that in the beginning you are doing something and that will generate *bhakti*. Right from the beginning, it is the same seed of devotional service. *Bhakti* becomes more intense later on, if one is favorable, avoids offenses, and is not envious of Bhagavān and the guru. This whole thing is called the path of *bhakti*.

It is unlike other paths where you have *sādhana*, or practice, which is different from the end result. Here you begin with *śravaṇa*, *kīrtan*, etc., and serve favorably. In the end, you also continue to do the same thing. This whole thing is called the path of *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** So in the beginning there is surrender and *śraddhā*?

**ANSWER:** Yes. The seed that one gets fructifies when one does favorable service. But, if one acts unfavorably, then it will not fructify.

**QUESTION:** So the seed itself is *bhakti*, but it is still in an undeveloped stage?

**ANSWER:** Yes, that is what seed means.



**QUESTION:** If Kṛṣṇa is inspiring us to surrender, then what exactly is our role in this process?

**ANSWER:** Kṛṣṇa gives the inspiration. Inspiration means the feeling that, "This is right, and this is wrong." And then you have to make the choice. Just as in the material world, people are attached to materialistic activities, and although so many obstacles come, still they choose to act on their desires.

This is how Kṛṣṇa gives the understanding or feeling that this material life is not the right process but spiritual life is. He also gives knowledge through literature. So you have to make the choice. Not that you are completely like a piece of stone or an instrument without consciousness. On account of consciousness, there is feeling, and based on that feeling, you make a decision. If you know, "this is right," then on account of this, you should make the right decision, and if you know, "This is wrong," then do not do it.

If even after knowing that "This is right," you still want to take the wrong path, then God is not going to stop you. That will not happen. Just as people do not give up the materialistic path even after undergoing so much trouble and severe pains, in the same way one should resolve consciously to execute *bhakti*. When one has the experience of what goes on in this world, and also the inspiration and knowledge of the right path, then why engage in that which one has done over and over even though it gives one the same miseries time and again?

So, one should follow that inspiration given by Kṛṣṇa. That is the role you have to play.

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**QUESTION:** Different devotees are emphasizing different devotional processes. Some are chanting 64 rounds, somebody may be chanting 108 rounds, another may be more involved in deity worship, and somebody else may be serving in the kitchen all the time. And in *Bhakti Sandarbha*, it is explained that all limbs of *bhakti* give perfection. On which devotional process shall I place the emphasis? How much shall I chant, how much *go-sevā* shall I do? Does this change as you progress?

**ANSWER:** All the analysis to explain *uttama-bhakti* is done in *Bhakti Sandarbha*. But people are not interested in *bhakti*, because *bhakti* is beyond *niṣkāma-karma*, where you are working without any motive or any result. People are not even interested in *niṣkāma-*

*karma*, what to speak of *bhakti*, which is beyond that. To make them interested, all this analysis is done and every activity is glorified. It is like, if you do *Gopāla-sahasra-nāma*, or you do this charity, then this will happen, etc. When one hears all these things, one may become interested in a particular process.

As it is said in *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu  
kaścīd yatati siddhaye  
yatatām api siddhānām  
kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*

“Among thousands of human beings, one might strive for perfection. Among many such who strive and even amongst those who have attained perfection, hardly anyone knows Me in reality.” (Gītā 7.3)

And further: “After many births, the truly learned surrenders to Me, knowing that Vāsudeva is everything. Such a great person is extremely rare.” (Gītā 7.19)

So after many many births a person in knowledge may surrender.

In *uttama-bhakti* one has to follow the order of the guru. But people have no idea about it. Even after taking shelter of a guru, they forget that they have to avoid that which is unfavorable and perform that which is favorable. It is from the guru that you have to learn what you have to do. That is the emphasis. If you go and analyze with your own mind, then everything will look attractive. In order that people become interested, it has to be described in that manner. But when you become interested by reading about it, then you are doing it with your own motive. But *bhakti* should not be performed because you have some motive. *Bhakti* is something that you do only for the pleasure of Bhagavān. That natural liking may happen after some time.

**QUESTION:** Because this spontaneity is not there, we do not know what we should do. Therefore we need more help and guidance.

**ANSWER:** First of all, *sāstra* brings you to the platform of *paropakāraḥ punyāya pāpāya parapiḍānām*. This means to understand that to care for the welfare of others is piety, and to trouble others is sin. This is the basic step. And when you come to that level, then beyond that, *bhakti* begins. But people do not even

understand the basic step, therefore there are so many descriptions of so many things given in the *śāstra*, in hopes that you may take to something. But once you come to the path of devotion, then you have to work under the guidance of the guru. You do not make the choice independently.

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**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of verse CC Madhya 22.107? This verse is always used to prove the theory of the dormant love of the living entity.

*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhya' kabhu naya  
śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya*

**ANSWER:** This verse is explaining how *bhakti* is attained. This is actually a translation of a verse in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which is described right in the beginning:

*nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya prākṛtyaṁ hr̥di sādhyatā* (BRS 1.2.2)

The appearance of *nitya-siddha bhakti* is called *sādhya*, and that comes from the *nitya-siddha* devotees. *Kṛṣṇa-prema nitya-siddha* means that *bhakti* exists within the eternal devotees of Bhagavān, and it comes from them.

Generally, in literature dealing with *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*, it is described that you perform *sādhanā* and by this *sādhanā* you will get the perfection. What you get or what you want to achieve is called *sādhya*, and the practice which you perform, the religious action which you do, is called *sādhanā*. In other words, there is a relation between *sādhanā* (cause) and *sādhya* (effect, action, and result). The result is called *sādhya* and the action which you take is called *sādhanā*.

Generally, in the material world, we see that you perform a certain action and then as a result of that action, something comes out of it—either tangible or intangible. What comes is a product of the action that you have taken. Like that, when you mix two things (*sādhanā*), then a third thing is produced (*sādhya*).

*Bhakti* is also called *sādhya*, because there is *sādhanā-bhakti*. So one will think, "If it is *sādhanā*, then I will perform some activity, and there should be a result from my activity." This is natural, because this is what people experience. But this is not the case with



*bhakti*. Although the word *sādhya* is used in the case of *bhakti*, it is not in the same sense as it is for example used in *karma-kāṇḍa*, where you perform a sacrifice if you want to go to heaven. That sacrifice is *sādhanā* and going to heaven is *sādhya* (a direct result of your action). If you do it properly, then you will get that result; no one can stop it.

But *bhakti* is not performing some work and then as a result of that work you will get *bhakti*. Although *bhakti* is *sādhya*, it is not *sādhya* in this sense. It is *sādhya* in the sense that it comes from those people who have it. And how does it come? It comes by the grace of the guru who has it. *Bhakti* comes by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, and not because one performs certain mechanical actions. Otherwise, if I perform certain activities and *bhakti* will come as a result of those activities, then it cannot be transcendental. *Bhakti* is not a material achievement like going to heaven. If *bhakti* was a result of material activities, then it would be lost after some time.

*Bhakti* is eternal; therefore it is not a result of anything material. *Bhakti* appears in the heart of a *sādhaka* (practitioner). If the *sādhaka* is simple and straightforward and performs favorable service, then when the guru (devotee) or Bhagavān is pleased, *sādhya* is given from the heart of the guru to the heart of the one performing the favorable service. And the appearance of *bhakti* from that devotee's heart in your heart is called *sādhya*.

*Bhakti* is a type of consciousness or a liking to do service. That liking cannot be a result of some material action. I cannot tell you to love somebody, and then you start loving that person. Love cannot be the result of a particular activity. Either you like or you do not like the other person—although in the material world this example may not be completely applicable, because after associating or talking with someone, you may start liking him or her. But that also can turn into dislike after some time. But the point here is that this consciousness of actual liking for devotional service without any material motives and without desiring anything cannot be the result of certain physical actions. That is impossible. Once the liking for service has been attained, it will never turn into disliking.

*Bhakti* comes by the grace of the *nitya-siddhas*, eternally perfect devotees. The appearance of *bhakti* in the heart is called *sādhya*.

*Nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhya' kabhu naya*—this verse says that *kṛṣṇa prema* is not *sādhya*, although it is called *sādhya*. First he denies that it is *sādhya* as we usually understand it.



Then why is it still *sādhya*? *Śravaṇādi-suddha-citte karaye udaya*: If you perform *śravaṇa*, etc., which is also *bhakti*, namely, *sādhana-bhakti*, then the heart is purified. This purification means to give up the feeling of independence or being in ignorance of the eternal position of the living entity. The living entity wants to remain independent of God; it does not want to surrender. Therefore, in *bhakti* the first thing is to surrender.

Ignorance is removed at the time of surrender if one is sincere about it. Otherwise, people take initiation and still remain independent, or they go away and turn against the guru, of which we have seen some examples. That is useless. Therefore, even if *bhakti* is given, unless you are willing to take it, you will not get it. The whole process is like this: By the will of *Īśvara* (the Supreme Regulator), you become interested in *bhakti*, and if you take action that is pleasing to the devotee, then it goes on increasing.

Otherwise, the ignorance of the living entity, which gives the feeling, "I am independent, I am somebody," cannot go away by any other process including *yoga* or *jñāna-mārga*. It will not go, because whatever you do, you will keep your independent ego, and it will actually solidify more. By doing *yoga* or something else, you may get a little power which will further increase your material pride. Instead of getting free from the material disease, you will become more sick. Although in the common man's eye you will get some applause, name, and fame, from the spiritual point of view, you have not made any progress and you have actually degraded.

Therefore, it is only *bhakti* that can clear the ignorance, and this comes from the *nitya-siddha* devotees. *Nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema* is a compound word. *Nitya-siddha* means eternally perfect and *kṛṣṇa-prema* means love of *Kṛṣṇa*. *Kṛṣṇa-prema* is in the eternally perfect devotees who are the associates of *Bhagavān*. So from the *nitya-siddha* devotees comes *bhakti*. *Bhakti* cannot be manufactured by any other process. Only they have it and are performing it. They are absorbed in *Kṛṣṇa*'s service.

Only by pleasing them can their consciousness be transferred to us. This is called *sādhya*.

QUESTION: And it will come only through the *paramparā*?

ANSWER: This *bhakti* will come from the guru through the *paramparā*. If something comes from somebody, he also must have received it from somebody. So that is the natural concept.

QUESTION: What does *nitya-siddha* devotees mean?

ANSWER: The eternal associates of Bhagavān.

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QUESTION: Since we haven't been connected to a proper guru and *sampradāya*, whatever we have done for many years is just a waste of time, or is there some gain or advancement in *bhakti* from that?

ANSWER: It can be taken as pious action, but not devotion. Devotion is what you do according to the instruction of Bhagavān, and not that which you or someone else has made up and you are following it. If service is done according to the instructions of Bhagavān, which means following *śāstra*, only then it is devotion. If it is done just because it is someone's concept, it cannot be devotion. It can only be taken as a good, pious activity.

*Uttama-bhakti* begins by accepting a qualified guru, because *bhakti* is not done independently. It is always under the guidance of a guru. If one does not have a qualified guru, then it is not *bhakti*. That is why even among the offenses, *guru avajñā* is one of the main offenses. It means if you are committing offenses (*guru avajñā* and not following *śāstra*), naturally there is no *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Is *uttama-bhakti* a synonym for *rāgānugā* and also for *vaidhī-bhakti*?

ANSWER: First of all, you have to understand *rāgānugā-bhakti* and *rāgātmikā-bhakti*.

*Rāgātmikā-bhakti* is found only in the eternal associates of Bhagavān. *Rāgātmikās* are the eternal associates of Bhagavān. They serve Kṛṣṇa out of love without any motive just for the sake of His pleasure.

By hearing about these dealings or loving relations between Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates, an aspirant becomes attracted and develops a desire to serve Bhagavān. Such a person is called a *rāgānugā-sādhaka*. He feels happy when Bhagavān is happy. The *rāgānugā-bhakta* follows the *rāgātmikā* devotee.

The definition of love is to serve, just for the pleasure of the object of one's love.

*Rāgānugā*, *uttama-bhakti*, *vraja-bhakti* and *mañjarī-bhāva* are all synonyms. The word *uttama-bhakti* is primarily used for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

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**QUESTION:** When a person is doing service, he may be doing something that is natural for him, so he can do that activity very well, and he can become absorbed very easily. It is even harder for him to actually surrender than it is for someone who is not naturally inclined to do that particular activity. If one really surrenders, is Kṛṣṇa empowering him or her to be able to do the service, whatever it is?

**ANSWER:** If you are working according to your liking, then obviously there is no surrender involved in that. Because you keep on doing whatever you like to do. The main thing is to follow the instruction, whether you like it or not. But if the instruction is just according to your liking, and then you are doing that, there is no surrender. Here, liking or not liking is not important, but what is important is that you like to follow the orders of the guru. The liking should be for that. Therefore, on this path of *bhakti* you have to transcend your material nature, and only then you can do *bhakti*. Transcending your nature means that you like to do what you are asked to do. When you like to follow the guru's instruction, then you will do anything. But if you just like to do what you like to do, then you are just following your mind, although that happens to be so-called service. But you remain independent, and if you stop liking it, you will stop doing it. Therefore, only by true surrender you can go beyond your nature. And when you like to follow, then you naturally like to do whatever you are told to do. Even if there is no liking, at least you follow the discipline.

There are two types of *bhakti*—*vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. *Vaidhī-bhakti* means that you act according to the instructions of *śāstra*: You must do it, because *śāstra* says. The other is *rāgānugā*, which means that you naturally like to follow. When you naturally like to follow, then you will do anything, and you will like it. You will actually have a liking for that, no matter if it is your nature or not. Therefore, when there is a liking for following the order of the guru (*rāgānugā*), then you are situated in your transcendental nature. Your nature then is to do what is pleasing to the guru. You like to do whatever is pleasing to him. It becomes your nature.

In *vaidhī-bhakti*, however, you do it because you should do it, although that is not your nature. You do it because it should be done, according to *sāstra*. That is the difference.

Surrender is not only required in spiritual life but also in material life. When you go to a doctor, you have to surrender to the doctor. When you go to a lawyer, you have to surrender to the lawyer, and tell him the facts. You cannot tell lies to the doctor and the lawyer, otherwise they cannot help you. Even if you have a servant, you have to surrender. If you go and shave your head, you surrender to the barber. He can do anything, as he has a razor in his hand. When you are a passenger in a car, you are surrendered to the driver, who holds your life in his hands. While travelling in a plane, you surrender to the pilot. People are always surrendering to others, but when it comes to the guru, they are making calculations like, "What is he going to do to me if I surrender?"

If you want to get any material education, you have to be willing to learn something you have not known before. You have to follow the discipline of the school, otherwise you cannot learn. If you are sincere about learning anything, you have to become disciplined. It is the same process in *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** I was thinking before that because people have their aptitudes, the result would be better if they did what they do best, have the talent for, or like to do. Now you are saying that when one is following *bhakti* and surrenders, then the results will be good, if not better. Forget about your inclination. The point is to follow the instructions of the guru?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

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**QUESTION:** Is the *rāgānugā-mārga* only available for human beings or also for the demigods?

**ANSWER:** This *bhakti* is not available anywhere else. It is only in this place called *Vṛndāvana*. And it is only with *Vrajiya-Kṛṣṇa* and the associates of *Kṛṣṇa* in *Vṛndāvana*, because nowhere else do people have the qualification to follow this path.

You should first understand *rāgānugā-bhakti*. *Rāga* means natural attraction. "Natural" means something which does not depend on anything else, including any instruction, any other object, person,



or qualification. It is absolutely independent of anything else. The common example of natural attraction is a young boy's attraction for a young girl or vice versa. This attraction is not based on any training or because of some other motive or instruction. It just happens by looking. Love, which is the popular word for attraction between a boy and a girl, is born by vision or by seeing. That attraction is powerful because it does not care or bother about any injunction. It is a very intense desire for the union with the object of love.

This type of natural attraction is present in the associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa for Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa was born and the *gopīs* just heard His name, they became attracted. The characteristic of this attraction is that they want to do *ānukūlya*, or pleasurable service for the object of their love, which here is Kṛṣṇa. And there is complete absorption of one's mind. The mind becomes absorbed in something to which it is naturally attracted. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is based on this characteristic of the attraction of the mind. Even this example of attraction of a young boy for a young girl is not perfect, because this type of attraction is based on material *saṁskāras*. It is not for *ānukūlya* of the object of attraction but for one's own pleasure. It is not permanent, it changes. However from this example, we can get an inkling of *rāga*.

This type of strong attraction exists only in the associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and not in any other *svarūpa* or manifestation of Bhagavān elsewhere. The manifestation of Bhagavān is according to the qualities of His associates. The greatness of a particular manifestation of Bhagavān is known by the greatness of His associates. The reason that Kṛṣṇa is considered the topmost manifestation is because His associates are the topmost. "Topmost" means their hearts are full of love for Kṛṣṇa without any motive or separate desire. This is not found in any of the other associates of other manifestations of Bhagavān. It is available only here in Vraja, not even in Mathurā or Dvārakā.

In *Bhagavad Gītā* there is talk of *niṣkāma-bhakti*. *Niṣkāma-bhakti* is hardly desired by anybody, because most people are just *sakāma*. This means they are always looking for acquisitions, such as happiness, liberation, position, power, or some other material gain in the name of *bhakti*. Even *niṣkāma-bhakti* is not easily available, and that is all the *Gītā* is talking about—what to speak of *vraja-bhakti* or the supreme *bhakti*, which is beyond anybody's conception. Once you understand it, you know that there is no possibility of *uttama-bhakti* being available anywhere else.

**QUESTION:** Are the *devas* aware that there is such a thing as *vraja-bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** They do not know, and only to make them understand, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed these pastimes. If they would have known, Indra would not have acted or behaved the way he behaved. He was angry with Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa stopped a sacrifice for Indra.

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**QUESTION:** In one *darśana*, Mahārāja said that, “To understand *bhakti*, one has to be free from motives, and therefore even Brahmā and Lakṣmī couldn’t get *uttama-bhakti*.” What motives did they have?

**ANSWER:** They did not want to give up their position.

**QUESTION:** And this was the blockage in their case?

**ANSWER:** Obviously, if you want something you have to give up something.

**QUESTION:** They did not feel as servants?

**ANSWER:** A servant in *uttama-bhakti* has to give up all other concepts and motives. Hanumān is a servant, the Pāṇḍavas are also servants, and so are Dhruva Mahārāja and Prahlāda. But everybody is attached to something, which means they are not qualified for *vraja-bhakti*.

In *uttama-bhakti*, we have to have the mood of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who was praying in the following way at the *kīrtana* of the *rathayātrā* in Jagannātha Purī:

*nāhaṁ vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro  
nāhaṁ varṇī na ca gr̥ha-patir no vana-stho yatir vā  
kintu prodyan nikhila-paramānanda-pūrṇāmṛtābdher  
gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*

“I am not a *brāhmaṇa*, I am not a *kṣatriya*, I am not a *vaiśya*, or a *śūdra*. Nor am I a *brahmacārī*, a householder, a *vānaprastha*, or a *sannyāsī*. I am only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the maintainer of the *gopīs*, an ocean of nectar of bliss.” (CC Madhya 13.80)

Brahmā and Lakṣmī do not have this mood of being servants of the gopīs.

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**QUESTION:** Some people may think that they are engaged in *uttama-bhakti*, they also accept a guru, and their guru is also explaining that *bhakti* is *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*, but unknown to them, there may be some misconceptions about the basic nature of *bhakti*.

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* means to give up all motives, to reject all *upādhis*, or bodily designations. You do not keep any *upādhi*.

*bhaktir asya bhajanam tad ihāmutropādhi-nairāsyenaivāmuṣmin  
manasaḥ kalpanam etad eva ca naiṣkarmyam*

(Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad 15)

This is the definition of *bhakti*: When you do not have any identification with the subtle or gross body and you do not desire anything in this life or the next one, except serving Bhagavān and fixing your mind on Bhagavān—that is called *naiṣkarmya*, or freedom from *karma*.

Most people do not understand *uttama-bhakti*—even those who claim to be followers of Śrī Caitanya.

The word *bhakti* is used in so many ways, like devotion to mother, father, country, and other gods, but that is not the *bhakti* which is described here. In other words, the proper meaning of *bhakti* is *uttama-bhakti*. This is most rare and is not understood by anybody, unless they study or understand the philosophy propounded by Śrī Caitanya.

The *Bhāgavatam* also says:

*śrī uddhava uvāca  
jñānam viśuddham vipulaṁ yathaitad  
vairāgya-vijñāna-yutaṁ purāṇam  
ākhyāhi viśveśvara viśva-mūrte  
tvad-bhakti-yogaṁ ca mahad-vimrgyam*

“Uddhava said: ‘Please explain to me in a conclusive way knowledge endowed with detachment and realization, which is approved by spiritual philosophers. O Lord of the universe! O form

of the universe! Teach me about pure *bhakti* which is sought by the great beings.” (SB 11.19.8)

*Mahad-vimṛgyam* means that even the great souls are only searching for that knowledge, but they do not get it. Such devotees also do favorable service, but it is done with certain motives. *Bhakti* can also be performed with certain motives. One gets satisfaction, a feeling of happiness and pleasure or some realizations, but it is still different from *uttama-bhakti*. These two should not be mixed, although they may look similar. This is the distinction that has to be made.

*Uttama-bhakti* is very clearly defined in the Gosvāmī literature. In other literature, *bhakti* is not properly defined. Like in *sāhitya*, *bhakti* is called *devapravaṇatā*, which means that a person has some kind of reverent feeling towards a particular deity. It is always with a certain motive. However, there is no question of selfless devotion to any person other than Kṛṣṇa. That is not possible.

In *sāhitya*, or poetics, the same terminology is used as in *bhakti* literature. The poets also may get certain understandings and realizations, and those explanations and realizations or experiences may sound similar to *bhakti*. *Vraja-bhakti*, or *uttama-bhakti*, however, is totally different. It comes by the process defined in the Gosvāmī literature. They have laid down the path. In the beginning there is *śraddhā*, then *sādhū-saṅga*, and *bhajana-kriyā*. This is the process.

The other types of *bhakti* are possible even without this type of *sādhū-saṅga* or surrendering in this manner. These, however, are separate types of *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** As long as there is some misconception, there has to be some separate motivation?

**ANSWER:** Yes. How will you give up your motivation if you have a misconception? It is not possible if you have no one to help you understand what *bhakti* is and what your misconceptions are. You will not even understand that there is some motive that you must give up.

Everybody desires *bhukti* and *mukti*. This is natural. People want *bhukti*, enjoyment, and *mukti*, liberation. So why will one get the desire for devotion in which one has to give up the desire for *bhukti* or *mukti*? This will not happen by itself.



Persons with misconceptions may even talk about *uttama-bhakti*. Words have some inherent power. So you hear the words, and then you make up some concept about them. These words also give you some understanding, some experience. You may use these words when talking. But this does not mean that you understand the real import of these words.

If you have the desire for *mukti*, then both, liberation and *uttama-bhakti*, are not possible at the same time. First, you will not accept somebody as Supreme and yourself as subservient to that Supreme Person. If you accept that you are subservient to another and not independent, then there is no question of *mukti* anymore. Second, if you will accept your own identity as distinct from anything else, then that duality will remain. Therefore, when you have a desire for *mukti*, you can neither accept a Supreme Person, nor can you accept yourself as an individual. Both will be obstacles in your attainment of *mukti*. If there are two entities, then there is a relationship, and a relationship is not *mukti* in the popular sense of the word. Whenever there is any desire for *mukti*, then that very desire is going to become an obstacle for you to accept the Absolute. When you accept that there is an Absolute or Supreme Person, and yourself as a living entity, then a relationship of master and servant follows. When there is a relationship of master and servant, it is not *mukti* in the popular sense. Consciously or unconsciously, that itself will create trouble. Why would one like that?

Therefore this concept has to be understood very clearly, and that does not happen by one's own endeavor. So in *bhakti* every desire has to be given up, as explained in the verse *jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛttam*. *Bhakti* should be devoid of all coverings of *jñāna* and *karma*—otherwise *bhakti* is not possible. But that covering of *jñāna* and *karma* will not go away unless one has grace—the association or *sat-saṅga*. And that *sat-saṅga* has to be of an *uttamā-bhakta*. There are various types of *sats*, or saintly people. One will not get *bhakti* by the association of a *jñānī-sat* or a *yogī-sat* person.

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**QUESTION:** At the stage of *niṣṭhā*, is it that *vikṣepa* (distraction), *kaṣāya* (material attachment, dirt), *rasāsvādāna* (taste, enjoyment), *apratipati* (imperfection, failure, non-achievement) are no longer present, or that they are just present, but not able to deviate a devotee?

ANSWER: This *laya*, *vikṣepa*, *kaṣāya*, etc., creates obstacles if one is pursuing the path of *yoga-mārga*, but not in *uttamā bhakti*. On the path of *bhakti*, when a person develops attachment, he likes this process and if he has received *bhakti* in the proper sense, which is the *svarūpa-śakti* of Bhagavān, then these things do not bother him. They do not deviate him from his devotional activities. Once a devotee is situated and fixed in his devotion, he will not become distracted or troubled by obstacles.

On other paths, such as *yoga*, there are distractions. When those distractions are described in *śāstra*, it is for other paths, because *śāstra* gives mixed descriptions. So one should learn to discriminate and apply only those parts of *śāstra* that refer to *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: It seems that it is even more difficult to attain *vraja-bhakti* than Brahman-realization?

ANSWER: There is no worship of *nirākāra* (Brahman). In Sanskrit, each word has a corresponding object, class, quality, or action, except *nirākāra*, as it is a word without an object. This impersonal path is for people who do not have liking for Bhagavān. Thus Bhagavān does not become manifest to such people.

In fact, *nirākāra* (formless) and *nirguṇa* (qualityless) do not really exist independently of Kṛṣṇa. These words actually describe Kṛṣṇa who does not have a material but a transcendental body. *Nirākāra* means no material form, and *nirguṇa* means devoid of material *guṇas*.

Furthermore, how can one worship or realize somebody who does not have any form?

*Bhakti* is simple but very rare. It is simple, because *bhakti* is easier to attain than Brahman, but it is rare, because *bhakti* is attainable only by the mercy of Bhagavān, and nobody is really interested in it. It is difficult to make a comparison between these two paths.

On the path of *bhakti*, there is a practice to attain it, although ultimately it depends on mercy. But *nirākāra*, the way it is understood by impersonalists, is impossible to attain, because it does not exist.

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**QUESTION:** Some people say that Bhagavān is in control, so there is no need for devotees to do anything like preaching, social work, *sevā*, *pūjā*, etc. How should we respond to them?

**ANSWER:** This type of thinking is deceptive talk. To speak like that is the height of selfishness.

*Bhakti* means to do favorable service to Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. Kṛṣṇa is the protector and the maintainer of the universe, and if someone is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, then he also acts accordingly. Just as Kṛṣṇa is merciful, the devotee is also compassionate towards others.

One who speaks like this is selfish. He is concerned only with his maintenance, sense pleasure, etc., but he does not want to do anything for others. How does this fit into *bhakti*? This is not *bhakti*, because *bhakti* means service, service to Kṛṣṇa and also to that which belongs to Him. Kṛṣṇa is the maintainer, so the devotee also likes to help. He has a compassionate heart, and He likes to care for the welfare of others. Somebody speaking such words is called *yukti-vairāgi*. Just like there is *yukta-vairāgya*, there is also *yukti-vairāgya*, which means renunciation for the purpose of cheating others. This renunciation is a show.

Some people also tried to train me like that when I first came to Vṛndāvana. They used to tell me to never make a house, because if I made a house, then there would be so much trouble. I was also told not even to keep water with me, because if I keep water, then somebody may come to drink it and this will be a disturbance to my *bhajan*. They said, "If you do not have anything, then nobody will bother you." People used to do all sorts of tricks to show how renounced they were. They would wear nice cloth, but they would put an outer covering on the cloth which looked dirty and very cheap. They would stay in a very dilapidated place and keep all good things in another place. They would even rent a place to keep the good things. They would not keep money, but would lend money on interest to somebody. All these types of tricks people used to do. This is all *yukti-vairāgya* and has nothing to do with *bhakti*.

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**QUESTION:** Because we do not have a fixed resolve in *bhakti*, we may have some doubts of which we are not aware. I have no doubts, but I also do not have a fixed resolve. Are these unmanifested doubts?

ANSWER: When a doubt comes, that means that you do not have a proper resolve.

QUESTION: But I do not realize that there are any doubts?

ANSWER: Then what's the problem with that? If you do not have a doubt, what's the problem? That is very good.

QUESTION: But if I do not have a doubt, and I do not have a fixed resolve?

ANSWER: If you do not have a doubt, it is because you have a resolve.

QUESTION: But if I had the resolve, I wouldn't fall asleep during chanting. When I fall asleep, then it seems that I do not have the resolve?

ANSWER: First, you should understand that there are two paths: One is *pravṛtti-mārga*, or the path of material attachment, and the other is called *nivṛtti-mārga*, or the path of spiritual attachment.

*Pravṛtti-mārga* (lit., *pra* = completely; *vṛtti* = material existence; *mārga* = path) is what people are generally following. This is because the body and senses have been designed to sense matter and to take pleasure in material things. The natural tendency of everybody is to run towards material objects, because the mind is material, and so are the senses. Then there are paths propagating how to go from *svārtha* or *pravṛtti-mārga* to *nivṛtti-mārga*. *Pravṛtti-mārga* means that one has *svārtha*, or a selfish nature (*sva-artha* = own interest). Selfish nature means doing favorable actions to one's own body and senses, and things related to them. This is natural. No training is needed for that. *Nivṛtti-mārga* (lit., *ni* = not, not material; *vṛtti* = existence) means acting for the sake of Bhagavān, His representative, or His manifestation as guru. Working for Bhagavān's sake is called *parārtha*. *Para* means Bhagavān and *sva* means one's body, self.

There are processes, such as in *yoga* or *jñāna*, where they tell you that if you control your mind, meditate, or try to improve your *guṇas* and come to *sattva*, then you can give up the *svārtha*, or *pravṛtti-mārga*. But it never works that way. These techniques or processes that they describe or talk about are material techniques only. No material process or technique can take you beyond matter. There is *samprajñāta-samādhi* and *asamprajñāta-samādhi* which are the higher states of mind control. Even in these states, the mind and



intelligence do not become free from material problems, because they are dealing with the *mahat-tattva*, which is the element from where *buddhi*, or intelligence, is created. There is no way to transcend it by using the mind. The example of Saubhari Munī demonstrates this very clearly.

The real process, which is effective, is the path of *bhakti*, because in *bhakti* one does favorable service to the guru. This means, when the guru is pleased, one gets the internal potency. That potency makes one fixed towards *parārtha*, or working for Bhagavān's sake, because that potency naturally flows towards Bhagavān just as the material energy naturally takes one away from Bhagavān. The internal potency reveals Bhagavān and the external potency conceals Him. When one has received the internal potency, then the problem of not perceiving the level of one's advancement is removed.

One should analyze one's own mind and discover whether the mind has the desire to enjoy itself or to do service for God or the guru. By analyzing your own mind, you will understand whether you actually have this resolve or you do not have it.

People in the material world have the determination to make money or to get sense pleasure, *artha* and *kāma*. They are always fixed in that desire, so their mind is always working to achieve that. Wherever they go, they will see an opportunity to fulfill their desires. For example, if they are very attached to making money, wherever they go, they will find a way to make money. If they are very much absorbed in sense pleasure, then they are constantly looking for some arrangement to enjoy. In the same way, when the mind becomes fixed or makes a resolve to do devotional service or favorable service, then the mind also sees everything in the same manner, i.e., everything as an opportunity to do service. In that situation there is no possibility that the mind will run this way or that way or make plans for sense pleasure.

These two (*pravṛtti*- and *nivṛtti-mārga*) are completely different paths and there is nothing in common between them. On the path of *bhakti*, you keep everything as it is, unlike on other paths, where they will ask you to go to a lonely place, give up your family and job. *Bhakti* is the most practical process: You remain wherever you are, with whatever you have, but the concept is changed. The change occurs at the level of the mind or consciousness, which is the root cause of the problem. The seat of the fundamental difficulty on the path of *uttama-bhakti* is that the mind itself is interested in *svārtha*

but not in *parārtha*. When the intellect is interested in *parārtha*, then there is no need to give up or change our existing situation because that does not bother us anymore.

It begins first with cooperation with the guru. When you cooperate, you get further *vyṛtti*, or by his grace you get the energy or power so that your mind takes interest only in the spiritual side. Then you completely lose all interest in the material side.

These are two completely distinct paths. The paths other than *bhakti* are basically material processes in the name of spirituality. They do not give spiritual results.

There is *śāstrīya-śraddhā* and there is material *śraddhā* based on the *guṇas* of nature. When one has *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, one has faith in the words of God and in the words of the guru. The devotee sees the guru as non-different from God. At that time there is no question of the mind having desire for pleasure. When *śāstrīya-śraddhā* is missing, one has *laukika-śraddhā*, and that is when the fluctuations of the mind occur.

One has to understand this, and this understanding comes by studying one's mind. Then one will know where one is situated. There is no need of somebody else telling you this, because you are your own best judge. You can figure out your own mind and find out exactly what is happening inside. What does the mind want? You should ask yourself, "What do I want?" and then you will know exactly where you stand. If the mind wants favorable service to Bhagavān, it is on the *nivṛtti-mārga*, but if it wants anything else, then it is on the *pravṛtti-mārga*.

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**QUESTION:** How do *grhasthas* (householders) follow the path of *nivṛtti-mārga*?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is the *nivṛtti-mārga* for everybody, whether *grhasthas* or non-*grhasthas*, because everybody has the *adhikāra* or eligibility to follow *bhakti*. Male, female, anyone, anywhere, in any stage of life, can perform *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the only *nivṛtti*, because on this path, one surrenders completely and becomes free from all designations, whether in this life or the next life, and one's mind is fixed only on the Supreme Person. Therefore *bhakti* gives complete detachment from everything else.

The topmost devotees of Bhagavān, the *gopīs*, were householders. In fact, the Pāṇḍavas and all the other devotees described in the *Bhāgavatam* were householders. Priyavrata was performing austerities in the Himalayas, and then Brahmā came to him and ordered him to come down and become the king. He came and ruled for a long time. The question was asked, "Why did he come down from there and rule the kingdom? How could he remain a devotee?" It is all explained. The following question was asked about the *gopīs*: "How is it that they only loved Kṛṣṇa, not even knowing Him as the Absolute Person, and yet they became the most elevated devotees?"

It is very difficult to understand *bhakti*, because it is a concept that is totally different from what people have heard on other paths. Great people like Brahmā, Uddhava, and others were confused as to how the *gopīs* could be devotees: What service did they do for Kṛṣṇa? Because they were just doing their household affairs. Even after meeting Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa-līlā* and attaining Him, they again went back to their homes and family life. The main point is that the *gopīs* are fixed in their consciousness. They accept Kṛṣṇa, and they are fully devoted in their mind only to Him.

That is the meaning of *nivṛtti*. *Pravṛtti* means *svārtha*, which means working for one's own self and *nivṛtti* means *paramārtha*—working only for Kṛṣṇa or guru. The *gopīs* accept Kṛṣṇa as their lover. Therefore they are on the *nivṛtti-mārga*.

Kṛṣṇa has also described this in *Bhagavad Gītā* and the same is stated in the *Bhāgavatam*.

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**QUESTION:** Regarding yesterday's question concerning *nivṛtti-mārga* and *pravṛtti-mārga* ...

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is the real *nivṛtti-mārga*.

Before the propagation of *bhakti*, the other paths like *yoga* and *jñāna* were also propagated as *nivṛtti-mārga*. On those paths the ultimate purpose of *nivṛtti* is to get *mokṣa*. But this is all imaginary, because *mokṣa* on those paths is to lose one's identity, and that is never possible. The self is an eternal entity. How can it lose its identity? Generally, those paths which lead to *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* were propagated so that people would give up their frivolousness and stop doing things that were harmful to society. Otherwise people just engage in destructive activities.



It is like the story of a *jinn* (ghost) who has a lot of energy. He has to be engaged in something, and if he has nothing to do, he will kill you. So you just tell him, "You take a pole and go up and down, up and down, up and down." So at least the *jinn* is not going to bother you, because his work will never come to an end. He is not going to achieve anything from his labor, except that he will not destroy you. Similarly, these other paths are propagated so that you engage in something and thus avoid causing disturbance to others. Otherwise every single person has an immense capacity to create havoc.

The ultimate purpose that everybody is inquiring about and looking for is happiness. But happiness itself is not defined on any of these paths. The purpose of *nivṛtti-mārga* is said to be liberation, in which you lose your own identity. If the identity itself is lost, where is the question of happiness? Therefore they say the state of liberation is *anirvacanīya*, or indescribable. Why is it indescribable? It is indescribable because, really speaking, it is imaginary.

In reality, the living entity cannot lose his identity. Sometimes, when people are creating disturbance, Bhagavān just puts them in His effulgence, so that they do not disturb anybody. There also, the identity is not lost.

The real path of *nivṛtti* is *bhakti*.

*buddhīndriya -manah -prāṇān  
janānām asṛjat prabhuh  
mātrārtham ca bhavārtham ca  
ātmane 'kalpanāya ca*

"The Supreme Lord manifested the material intelligence, senses, mind, and vital air of the living entities so that they could indulge their desires for sense gratification, take repeated births to engage in fruitive activities, become elevated in future lives, and ultimately attain liberation." (SB 10.87.2)

Bhagavān created the body, mind, and senses of the living entities for a certain purpose. He did not give you the body, mind, senses, and everything else in order for you to reject the world, yourself, your body, or for you to say that it is just an illusion and imaginary.

There is the philosophy of *dr̥ṣṭiśr̥ṣṭivāda*, that the world actually does not exist. When you open your eyes, it comes into existence, and when you close your eyes, then nothing exists. This is one of the predominant philosophies of Advaitavāda. These are all *asuric* ideas.



God is real, and He has created this world. The world is also real, because it is His energy. Its existence does not depend on the closing or opening of our eyes. But when people are not interested in understanding the Supreme Person, they are given something to do so that they remain busy. By doing something, they leave the world in peace. Otherwise, *bhakti* is the most auspicious path. The verse itself (SB 10.87.2) is saying that this creation is done for *mātrārtham ca bhavārtham ca / ātmane 'kalpanāya ca*. There are senses and there are sense objects so that one can also make use of them and continue the creation. This is one purpose. The creation exists also for the self to get self-satisfaction and ultimately to realize its relationship with Bhagavān and become free from material bondage. This is the ultimate purpose.

*Bhakti* is a simple process and right from the beginning when one takes shelter of a guru and does service without cheating propensities, *amāyayā-anuvṛtti*, then one becomes situated on the *nivṛtti-mārga*. Then there is no need of undergoing the troublesome path of *jñāna* or *yoga* or even *karma* in which so many complicated processes have to be followed. All that complexity is not needed in *bhakti*.

If one's behavior is truthful, then the problem is solved and one will live here in happiness and bliss. If people are trustworthy, then there is no cheating involved between disciple and guru or with people who are related to the guru. Then one will live very happily. Otherwise, people are always in fear, doubt, and anxiety, as they have so much apprehension in dealing with others.

The philosophy of *bhakti* is that you become truthful and free from the propensity for cheating and envy, and then, after giving up this body, you will live with God who is the embodiment of truth. In this philosophy, both, the *vyāvahārika* (material) and the *paramārthika* (transcendental) states are the same. Otherwise, so many distinctions have to be made; this is material, you have to give up this, this is all *māyā*, etc. So the real path of *nivṛtti* is *bhakti*.

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**QUESTION:** In some places *bhakti* is described as very easily attainable and in some other places as very rare. It is also said that, "Even the highest stages of *bhakti* are easily attainable." How can we understand this?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is simple because there is nothing much you have to do, as in the case of Ajāmila, who by committing *nāmābhāsa* attained *bhakti*. But the problem is that we do not want it, because nobody has any purpose to achieve from *bhakti*. People are not simple and straightforward. Unless one is simple and straightforward, one cannot get devotion. Because we have a crooked and deceiving mentality, *bhakti* is not available.

There is one story in *Pañcadaśī*, a book of Advaitavāda. The guru was teaching how nobody is interested in liberation, but his disciple did not agree. So the guru turned him into a pig. Now, when the disciple was a female pig, he had ten to twelve piglets, and they were lying in the mud. Then the guru came and said, "You are my disciple. I will relieve you from this pig body and grant liberation. Please leave these babies and follow me." The disciple said, "No, it is so nice. I am enjoying so nicely with these piglets and I am so happy here, lying in this muddy water, that I do not want to go." He did not want to give up even that hellish body of a pig.

Similarly, people do not want *bhakti*. When they do not want it, then nobody can give it. Otherwise, if one wants it, one gets the association of a devotee and then one serves him and gets *bhakti*. Therefore, although *bhakti* is very simple, it is very rare for the reason that nobody is actually interested in it.

QUESTION: Did Ajāmila want *bhakti*?

ANSWER: He got it even without doing any *bhakti* or wanting it. This is to show that it is so simple. He did not reject it. Once he realized its importance, he gave up his attachment towards everything else.

QUESTION: Because he was simple and straightforward, he got it?

ANSWER: Yes, he was simple, although he was sinful. That is to show how simple the process of *bhakti* really is.

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QUESTION: Śrī Caitanya brought *rāgānugā-bhakti*, but what was before that?

ANSWER: He is the one who propagated it, but *bhakti* is ever existent. He is the one who made it known.

\*

QUESTION: Is *ajñāta-sukṛti* a real or only a psychological term?

ANSWER: There is no such thing as *ajñāta-sukṛti*. *Bhakti* comes by the mercy of Bhagavān and His devotee. And it is not that you make somebody do something by controlling him or tricking him and then he will become a devotee or make advancement by that act. This is just to convince people to go and preach or collect money or whatever from others.

QUESTION: So in reality it is just a psychological fiction?

ANSWER: There is nothing like *ajñāta-sukṛti* or some other act which can bring one to devotion. *Bhakti* is *niṣkāma*. It is based on knowledge and proper understanding. You cannot make somebody do something in ignorance and that will give him *bhakti*. This does not happen.

QUESTION: What does *niṣkāma* mean in this connection?

ANSWER: It means that devotion does not come by some materialistic activity or by something that you do with a material desire. *Bhakti* is free from all material desires. By purchasing a religious book, a person is not performing an act of devotion.

QUESTION: In *Bhakti Sandarbha* there is a description of *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti* that explains that a person can even do *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti* unknowingly, like in the example of Prahāda Mahārāja.

ANSWER: That is not *ajñāta-sukṛti*. *Bhakti* comes by the mercy of a devotee. Prahāda got this mercy while he was in the womb of his mother. There is no such thing as *ajñāta-sukṛti*.

QUESTION: So all these stories cited in the *Bhakti Sandarbha*, like the tiger eating the man who had eaten *prasāda* and received benefit, what are they about?

ANSWER: These are devotional activities. Those stories are there to show the power of devotional activity. They do not form part of *ajñāta-sukṛti*. There is no such term as *ajñāta-sukṛti*.

QUESTION: Then it is altogether an invented term?

ANSWER: Yes, I do not know who invented it. *Bhakti* is directly experienced. If there is something like *ajñāta-sukṛti* that leads to *bhakti*, then there must be some examples of that also. If you just

say, "He is going to get it in the next life," then that is no evidence. How do you know?

QUESTION: If I understand it properly, a person who does a devotional activity which is *svarūpa-siddha bhakti*, experiences the effect immediately?

ANSWER: Yes, he does, if the effect is not covered by an offense. People also say, "If you take a bath in Rādhā Kuṇḍa, you will get *kṛṣṇa-prema*." But who is getting it? If you are not getting it, then there must be something wrong.

QUESTION: In that case, is it covered by an offense?

ANSWER: Yes. It does not mean that you are going to get it in the next life. You should experience it now. *Bhakti* gives direct experience. It is not like *karma*, where you do some pious act now and you get the result in your next life. You believe this, but have no experience of it in this life. In the case of *bhakti*, whatever you will get, you will realize now, in this life.

## 16. Bhakti—Other Kinds of

QUESTION: Do *karma-miśra-bhakti* and *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* belong to *vaidhī-bhakti* or are they separate paths?

ANSWER: *Karma-miśra-bhakti* and *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* belong to the category of *vaidhī-bhakti*. They are secondary, because there *bhakti* is more in the background. The person's interest is more in sense enjoyment or liberation, respectively.

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QUESTION: In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, I heard about *āropa-siddha-bhakti* and *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*. Is *āropa-siddha-bhakti* like *karma-miśra-bhakti* and *saṅga-siddha-bhakti* like *jñāna-miśra-bhakti*?

ANSWER: *Āropa-siddha* and *saṅga-siddha* are activities that are not *bhakti* in themselves nor are their purposes *bhakti*. They are secondary activities. *Āropa-siddha bhakti* means offering one's *karma* to Bhagavān, and *saṅga-siddha* means performing some activities that may help one to engage in *bhakti*.



People engage in *karma* or *jñāna* for enjoyment or liberation. They are not interested in devotional service. But without devotional service, nothing becomes perfect, nor can it give its own result. Therefore, they take shelter of *bhakti* to attain success in that particular activity, whether it is *karma* or *jñāna*. At that time, those activities take on the flavor of *bhakti* to give the result, but they are not *bhakti* themselves. It is actually *karma-miśra* or *jñāna-miśra*, but not *bhakti*.

QUESTION: Do they consciously take shelter of *bhakti* when they are doing such activities or do they just do these activities because it is written in *śāstra* to do like that?

ANSWER: Consciously means what?

QUESTION: To understand that if I do *bhakti*, then I will get the results?

ANSWER: No. They just follow the process. People do not really understand. Even devotees have difficulty understanding this concept.

QUESTION: Then it is also described that one can do all these kinds of *bhakti*—*āropa-siddha-bhakti*, *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*, and *sva-rūpa-siddha-bhakti*—with cheating or without cheating (*kaitava* or *akaitava*). I was wondering what is *āropa-siddha* without cheating?

ANSWER: These are all various stages which show how different types of people come to *bhakti*. *Kaitava* (cheating) means that you have some motive other than *bhakti*. This is the case most of the time. *Akaitava* means to do it to attain *bhakti*. Different levels are shown to help us understand pure *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* means to do service, and not to ask anything in return, and that is very difficult. Even *niṣkāma-karma* is difficult, because everybody is working for a certain result. If you do something, you want to see a result. If you do not see the result, you become upset or you want to give it up. To come to the level of *bhakti*, all these motives have to be given up, because there should be no other motive, *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*.

*Uttama-bhakti* is free from all types of deceptive mentality. Otherwise, the tendency is to think that if you do some service, then at least somebody should say, "Thank you," and if he does not say

it, then you feel upset. It means that you are interested in hearing some nice words, and not in performing *bhakti*. This is not *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* actually means, you are only interested in doing service and the service is your result. That itself is your "Thank you." You are getting the opportunity to do devotional service, and you desire nothing else. That is the meaning of *anyābhilāṣitā*.

Who can be like that? Therefore, there are different levels of *kaitava*. *Jñānīs* are also engaging in meditation on Bhagavān, even to the extent of realizing Him, but after that, they only want Brahman. All their meditation, all their chanting or *kīrtana* is just a deceptive act, because they are not interested in *bhakti* as such.

There are different types of *kaitava*, whether it is on the path of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, or something else. That is shown in *Bhakti Sandarbha*. If one does *āropa-siddha-bhakti* only to gain *bhakti*, then it is free of *kaitava*. But that is very very rare.

QUESTION: Does that mean that there is no *āropa-siddha-bhakti* without cheating propensity, because it is even difficult for devotees to do service without motives, what to speak of others?

ANSWER: Yes, obviously.

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QUESTION: I have a further question about *āropa-siddha-bhakti*. What does *karmārpaṇa*, or offering one's action, mean? Does it mean that one offers everything that one does to Kṛṣṇa and in this way, it becomes *bhakti*? Practically, what does it mean?

ANSWER: You just say, "I am offering this work or its result to Kṛṣṇa."

QUESTION: That is all?

ANSWER: People in general like their own bodies very much and are attached to them. They only want to take care of their bodies and things that are related to the body. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to understand *bhakti*, especially *uttama-bhakti*.

*Karmārpaṇa* is the first step to enter into *bhakti*. The writers of scriptures like Vyāsadeva have made different steps so that even materialistic people could be accommodated. First, there is *sakāma-karma*, which means you perform religious activities with material

desires. The next step is *niṣkāma-karma*, because people are mostly interested in liberation.

*Karmārpaṇa* is basically for people who are interested in spiritual life but do not want to surrender. Therefore, they do the work and want the result. So at least they can begin, saying, "I am offering something to Bhagavān." It is not *bhakti*, but because they are saying this much, it is considered as devotion. At least they accept God.

Whereas others do not accept God because they think, "What is the need for that? I will work and enjoy the fruit of my endeavors." The first step a person has to make is to at least accept that there is a God. It is very difficult to get rid of ignorance about spiritual life. The reason for this is our material attachment. Therefore, the first step is that the person at least accepts the existence of God. When you accept the existence of God, then you can acknowledge that He is doing something for you. So you also give the results of your activities to Him.

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QUESTION: Is *karmārpaṇam bhakti*?

ANSWER: No, it is not *bhakti*. As Nārada spoke to Vyāsadeva:

*naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitam  
na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nirañjanam  
kutaḥ punaḥ śaśvad abhadram īśvare  
na cārpitam karma yad apy akāraṇam*

"Even *naiṣkarmyam* devoid of devotion to Śrī Acyuta is not glorious. Then what to speak of the *sakāma-karma* which causes suffering both during practice and at the stage of perfection, and also *niṣkāma karma*, when it is not offered to Bhagavān?" (SB 1.5.12)

*Niṣkāma karma*, which is devoid of devotional mood, is useless, what to speak of *sakāma-karma*, which is inauspicious from beginning to end. In *niṣkāma*, the person at least has the mood of not enjoying material results. *Niṣkāma* means one is interested in *mukti*, and *karma* means one wants material results. *Mukti* is inauspicious, what to speak of materialistic work for fruitive results. Therefore, *karmārpaṇa* is not considered as *bhakti*.

This is also explained by Jīva Gosvāmī in the commentary of verse 7.5.23, *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaranam*. There also, the word *pūmsrāpitā* is used. This means, "offered to Bhagavān." But in the

commentary it is said, "You do not just perform the work and then offer the result, but you offer yourself to Bhagavān, and then you work for Him."

Otherwise, if you work and then offer the result, you remain independent, which means you remain a *bahirmukha*, or non-devotee. You are not interested in surrendering, so you keep yourself separate from Bhagavān.

*Bhakti* means that you surrender yourself. The offering is of yourself and not of the work. Once you offer yourself, then whatever you do is naturally offered. *Karmārpaṇa* is not *bhakti*.

As it was explained yesterday, it is a preliminary step for a person who is not interested in devotion, like a stepping stone.

**QUESTION:** How do we offer our actions to Bhagavān (*karmārpaṇa*)? Before we do something, do we pray to Bhagavān that we are able to please Him and the guru, or how is it done?

**ANSWER:** In *uttama-bhakti*, you do not offer your works or the results of your works, but you offer yourself. You surrender yourself, and then you do the work.

Offering of works is done either in *karma-mārga* or in other *bhakti-mārgas*, because there you keep yourself independent. If you offer your works to God, then you keep yourself independent, and you will get the results of those works. So you cannot be a devotee.

Devotee means one who belongs to God, and therefore he works for God. He is not independent. To offer something, you have to remain independent. If you belong to Kṛṣṇa, then whatever you do belongs to Him. If you are thinking of offering your works, you have to keep yourself separate and then offer. Then you get the result of your works, whether it is *sakāma* or *niṣkāma* (with material motive or with no motive). Both fall into the same category. Just as a devotee is interested neither in piety nor sin, in the same way, he is not interested in *sakāma-karma* or *niṣkāma-karma*, because both are useless to him. *Niṣkāma* also does not mean that there is no desire. *Niṣkāma* means that there is a hidden motive. In *sakāma-karma*, you explicitly ask for something; whereas in *niṣkāma* you do not ask, but you have some desire. Otherwise, why is one keeping oneself independent? One wants to remain independent, because one wants something separately for oneself. A devotee rejects *niṣkāma* in the same way as *sakāma* is rejected.



In *uttama-bhakti* one has to surrender oneself and then work. Then there is no question of offering the result. If one desires some result, then one can do that, but that would not be *bhakti*.

Therefore, only *bhakti* is really *niṣkāma*, or without any material desires. All other processes have some desire—explicit or implicit.

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**QUESTION:** *Bhagavad Gītā* describes different *guṇas* of *karma*. Does that also exist in *bhakti*, because *bhakti* is free from the *guṇas*?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is *guṇātīta*, beyond the *guṇas*. A true devotee is fully dedicated to Bhagavān. His mind is completely absorbed just like the water of the Ganges flows towards the ocean.

However, because people do *bhakti* with different motives, it is called *bhakti* in the *guṇas*. Somebody is *sāttvika*, somebody is *rājasika*, and somebody is *tāmasika*. So the goal of their devotion is in the *guṇas*. This is called *bhakti* in the *guṇas*. Actually, it is the person's own motive, which is in the *guṇas*, not *bhakti*. When it is said that *bhakti* is in *sattva* or *rajas*, it means that the person executing a devotional act has a motive that is in these *guṇas*. So a person's *guṇas* are superimposed onto *bhakti*. Then *bhakti* is said to be in the *guṇas*.

## 17. Brahmā, Brahmā-saṁhitā

**QUESTION:** When did Brahmā speak the *Brahmā-saṁhitā*, after his *tapasya* or after the *brahma-vimohana-līlā*?

**ANSWER:** Brahmā recited the *Brahmā-saṁhitā* at the beginning of creation. After the period of annihilation, Brahmā was born from the lotus navel of Bhagavān. When he was puzzled about his duty, he heard the sound "*tapa*," which means to perform austerity. He did austerities for a long period of time and then he was given a *mantra*. After that, Bhagavān appeared and in glorification of Bhagavān, Brahmā recited a prayer which is called *Brahmā-saṁhitā*. This was all recited by the grace of Bhagavān.

Dhruva Mahārāja also recited prayers, although he was not educated. Bhagavān touched his cheeks with His conch, and then Dhruva recited prayers. Similarly, Brahmā recited this *saṁhitā* to glorify Kṛṣṇa.

Bhagavān has three types of activities: One is that He enjoys His energy in the form of *svarūpānanda* (during yogic sleep after the complete annihilation); the second is *aśvayānanda* (when He manifests His energies in the form of creation); the third one is *svarūpa-śaktyānanda* (when He enjoys His pastimes with His devotees).

Brahmā is a *niṣkāma* devotee of Bhagavān, and for Bhagavān's pleasure he created this world. But he did not know how he had to perform his activities. So first he did austerities and then the knowledge was revealed to him. That is when he recited the *Brahmā-saṁhitā*.

**QUESTION:** If Brahmā is considered a *niṣkāma-bhakta*, then what about *Brahmā-saṁhitā*?

**ANSWER:** He was inspired to speak, just as Dhruva was inspired. But this does not mean that he was a *vraja-bhakta*. Bhagavān made him speak like that.

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**QUESTION:** Was Brahmā's knowledge covered at the time of *brahma-vimohana-līlā*?

**ANSWER:** In the beginning, when Brahmā got the *mantra* from Bhagavān, he did not see Him as he saw Him in Vṛndāvana. He got it through the sound of the flute, and then the knowledge was revealed to him in his heart, as the first verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says. So it was through inspiration. But when Aghāsura was killed, he saw a brilliant light from Aghāsura's *ātmā*, which entered into Kṛṣṇa's body, and he was curious about its source. That is when he came to Vraja and saw Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd boy. He was not sure if this is the same person whom he saw before; therefore, he decided to test Him. He stole the calves and friends of Kṛṣṇa. After one year, he realized that Kṛṣṇa was Bhagavān Svayam. Then he again prayed. The prayers of Brahmā to Śrī Kṛṣṇa are found in the Tenth Canto, fourteenth chapter of the *Bhāgavatam*. Some scholars do not accept this very important part. They say that three chapters—the twelfth through the fourteenth chapter—are interpolated.

However, these three chapters establish Kṛṣṇa as Svayam Bhagavān and are the explanation of verse 1.2.11:

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas  
tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam  
brahmeti paramātmēti  
bhagavān iti śabdyate*

“Knowers of the Absolute call this *tattva* non-dual consciousness, naming it as Brahman, as Paramātmā, and as Bhagavān.”

Without these three chapters, you cannot understand the verse which says that Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān. Brahmā realized that, and then he prayed and established Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Bhagavān. Brahman and Paramātmā are His partial manifestations for the sake of those who want to realize His feature without qualities (Brahman) or His controlling feature as Immanent Being (Paramātmā). Kṛṣṇa Himself is the ultimate, *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*, as it was spoken by Brahmā in *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.1).

Furthermore, pure devotional service to Him, which is *anābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, is also revealed in these chapters on the pretext of describing Kṛṣṇa’s activities with His devotees in Vraja. Kṛṣṇa further told Uddhava in the Eleventh Canto about these activities.

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**QUESTION:** What is the destination of Brahmā and also of the people on *satya-loka* at the time of annihilation?

**ANSWER:** Those who are following *jñāna-mārga* go to Satyaloka after death. Since they are not devotees, they cannot enter the spiritual world. At best, they can merge into Brahman. Those who are devotees and are interested in *krama mukti* (gradual liberation), also go to Brahmā’s planet. At the end of Brahmā’s life, they enter into the spiritual world. However, people who are following *jñāna-mārga*, because they are not surrendered, remain here, and in the next creation continue to live in the material world. Those who are enemies of Kṛṣṇa and have been killed by Him, remain outside the spiritual planets, in His effulgence.

**QUESTION:** And Brahmā himself?

**ANSWER:** He is a devotee, so Brahmā goes to Bhagavān’s planet.

## 18. Brahman

**QUESTION:** When a *jīva* has reached Brahman, is it possible for him to get back his individuality?

**ANSWER:** It is possible, if Bhagavān wants. Merging does not mean becoming one. It means to exist without a spiritual body. The individuality is not lost.

## 19. Chanting

**QUESTION:** Can we, as some devotees do, chant *japa* in the morning before having taken shower? Is it enough just to wash our hands and mouth?

**ANSWER:** No. For chanting you should be in a clean condition. It is a meditation in which we call out to Bhagavān. This should be done respectfully, and only when we are clean.

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**QUESTION:** Some Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas are chanting four rounds of the *pañcatattva-mantra* before they start chanting the *mahā-mantra*. Is this in the *śāstra* or just speculation?

**ANSWER:** In *śāstra* it is prescribed only to chant the *mahā-mantra*.

**QUESTION:** I heard that the *pañcatattva-mantra* is even more powerful than the *mahā-mantra*, is that true?

**ANSWER:** It is not like that. *Pañcatattva-mantra* is not more powerful than *mahā-mantra*.

Whatever name you like to chant, you chant. That is good for you. Different names, like the different *avatāras*, have different powers.

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**QUESTION:** How to actually chant the Holy Name? How should we pray?



ANSWER: You have to keep the mood that you are the servant and Bhagavān is the master. He belongs to you. In that mood you take His Name. You should know that the Name and Bhagavān are non-different. You approach Him by calling His Name.

QUESTION: When we chant, should we concentrate on the Name itself or ...?

ANSWER: Just on the Name itself, because the Name is Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: How should one chant?

ANSWER: Each word has its meaning: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. When one is chanting "Kṛṣṇa," then one should think of Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: What should I concentrate on during chanting—should it be the sound vibration, a certain deity, or a description?

ANSWER: When you chant, you are chanting the Name. And you have to keep your mind on the Name only, not on anything else, because chanting is of the Name, not of any form, any *līlā*, or anything like that. If anybody is chanting and thinking of something else, say the form, a quality, or a pastime of Kṛṣṇa, then he does not understand the fact that the Name and Bhagavān are non-different. Otherwise, if one is chanting the Name, then why should one have to think of some other form, pastime, or anything else? If one does that, then the Name becomes secondary and the other thing primary. That itself is improper and displeasing to the Name.

On the path of *yoga* and *jñāna*, they consider the sound just a representation of something, and therefore they chant and think of something else. In *bhakti-mārga*, the Name is not a representation of something, but the Name and the person both are non-different. The Name is not signifying anything, it is not a symbol. On other paths, they consider the *mantra* or sound symbolic. Therefore, they think of so many things.

In *bhakti*, however, you chant the Name and you also think of the Name only, and the Name is Bhagavān Himself. Therefore, it contains everything in it. Whether form, pastimes, or qualities—everything is included in the Name. So it has to be chanted and it has to be

meditated on. The Name is the form of Bhagavān, śabda-Brahman, the sound form of Bhagavān. There is no difference between the Name and Bhagavān. People have heard of other processes and come with strange ideas to the path of *bhakti*. The qualification for *bhakti* is different from the qualification for *jñāna*, *yoga*, or *karma*. The qualification for the path of *yoga* is not the qualification for the path of *bhakti*. So one should give up the understanding which is applicable to the other processes and follow only the process of *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Could you give the meaning of the *mahā-mantra*?

ANSWER: The *mahā-mantra* has three names of Kṛṣṇa: Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. In the *mahā-mantra* the Names are in the vocative case. Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma are the vocative cases of these three Names.

So it is calling Kṛṣṇa, but in the mood of a loving relationship. If you love somebody, and he also loves you, then you call out to that person out of love or affection, and chanting the *mahā-mantra* should be done in a similar mood. The *mantra* is recited in the mood of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, or *vraja-bhakti*. It is a devotee's call to Bhagavān in a loving relationship.

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QUESTION: Is it right to pray at the same time as chanting? Should we be thinking, "Please engage me in Your service," or should one just fix the mind on the use of the *mantra*?

ANSWER: The *mantra*, such as the *gāyatrī* or *mahā-mantra*, is a prayer to Bhagavān, asking Him to inspire our intelligence so that it turns towards Him. The material body naturally has no inclination to serve Bhagavān. It is designed to run towards the sense objects, because it is made of matter and it likes matter only, not spirit. Therefore, the *mantra* is chanted with the prayer to inspire our intelligence to serve Bhagavān—but it is chanted after surrendering. When one surrenders, as in the case of initiation, and one has the mood "I have surrendered myself," then while chanting the *mantra*, one has the mood that Bhagavān should inspire the chanter, so that the mind or intelligence of the chanter flows towards Bhagavān naturally, just as the intelligence or the mind naturally runs to the sense objects. That is the meaning of the *mahā-mantra*, *gāyatrī-mantra*, and all other *mantras*. That is the prayer or the mood while chanting.

Generally, it is understood that when a person chants a *mantra*, as in *yoga-mārga* or other paths, then one wants to achieve something with it. The *mantra* is a means to an end. There is the sound of the *mantra*, and there is some object denoted by that sound. On the path of devotion, in *uttama-bhakti*, the *mantra* itself is Bhagavān. There is no difference between the *mantra* and Bhagavān. The sound of the *mantra* is not an instrument by which you know some object, but the sound itself is Bhagavān. It is not that by this *mantra* we pray to somebody else or something else. When the *mantra* is chanted, it is the form of Bhagavān—the *mantra* and Bhagavān are non-different. This is the speciality of *uttama-bhakti*, or pure devotional service, that here Bhagavān and His Name are non-different. So the *mantra* is not considered as an instrument to achieve something, but the *mantra* itself is the ultimate goal or ultimate purpose which we want to realize, and not anything else beyond that.

In *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, there is a verse explaining that *nāma* is Kṛṣṇa Himself, there is no difference:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś  
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ  
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukta  
bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

“The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa is a wish fulfilling gem. It is conscious by nature and a manifestation of all *rasas*. It is complete, pure, ever-liberated, and non-different from Kṛṣṇa Himself.” (CC Madhya 17.133)

In our common experience, the sound and the object are two different things. However, Bhagavān and His Name are non-different; therefore the Name should not be disrespected. Attaining the Name is the highest perfection. If somebody has attained the Name, he has attained Kṛṣṇa. However, that realization depends on our own trust or faith. The perfection is based on *śraddhā*. If we do not have *śraddhā*, then we do not have realization. Therefore: *ātau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅga 'tha bhajana-kriyā*.

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**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of the *mahā-mantra*? What should be the mood of prayer?

**ANSWER:** The *mahā-mantra* has three names: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma, which are by nature an invocation. Invocation, in this case,

means to call somebody out of love and affection. And when you call with great affection, then you repeat it. Just as when you meet your friend and say, "O come, come!" So you say it twice. Like that, everything is repeated twice. It is just the calling of Kṛṣṇa in an affectionate mood—the mood of the residents of Vraja, when there is an affectionate relationship with Bhagavān. You call Him in that affectionate relation.

**QUESTION:** So it is not Harā (Rādhā) or something like that?

**ANSWER:** If you take the meaning Harā, then it is not *vraja-bhakti*. *Vraja-bhakti*, or *rāgānugā-bhakti*, means following the footsteps of the great ācāryas. They, including Mahāprabhu Himself, chanted it as Hari, not Harā.

When people want to imitate, they want to perform better than the original. You can chant any name, as there is no restriction. You can chant whatever name of Bhagavān you like, but *vraja-bhakti* means following in the footstep, especially of Śrī Caitanya Himself. Mahāprabhu was in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhā; He is not going to chant Her name. He is calling Kṛṣṇa, as Rādhā calls Kṛṣṇa. All three are names of Kṛṣṇa.

Also, there are people who are directly making up a *mantra*: "Rādhe Kṛṣṇa, Rādhe Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Rādhe Rādhe, Rādhe Syāma, Rādhe Syāma ...," and they think that they are better than us. They do not understand the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. You cannot do just anything and get the same result. To get *rāgānugā-bhakti*, you have to follow as Mahāprabhu has shown it. Otherwise, it is just entertainment and not *bhakti*.

The basic principle of *uttama-bhakti* is that Bhagavān is in the heart of the devotee and the devotee is in the heart of Bhagavān. They are related to each other in a loving relationship. There is Rādhā and there is Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān and Rādhā is the devotee. The mood in which Rādhā calls Kṛṣṇa is a loving relationship—that is the *mahā-mantra*, and then to follow in Her footsteps, that is *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Otherwise, by copying, you can do anything you like, just as you have to put a *chaunk* in the *sabji*, and then it is very tasty. The other *mantra* makes a good sound and everybody likes it, but that does not mean that it is the real thing. People are also adding a *chaunk* to the *mahā-mantra*.

There are many explanations of the *mahā-mantra*, because in Sanskrit it is possible to attribute many different meanings. But what was the meaning in the mind of Caitanya Mahāprabhu? That



is what we have to follow, not that we get carried away with some fantastic meanings.

QUESTION: And the name Rāma in the *mahā-mantra* is also Kṛṣṇa, not Balarāma or ...?

ANSWER: It is only Kṛṣṇa. It is neither Balarāma nor Paraśurāma nor Rāma, the son of Daśaratha. It is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is Rāma.

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QUESTION: The *mantra* is directly Kṛṣṇa. One does not have to anticipate any other result by chanting the *mantra*, as the *mantra* itself is directly Bhagavān. At a more advanced level, even though one believes that this is what *śāstra* is saying, one still does not have a direct perception of it. What prevents that perception, or how does that perception come to one?

ANSWER: First we have to have *śraddhā*. As Bhagavān says in SB 6.16.51:

*śabda-brahma param brahma mamobhe śāsvatī tanū*

“The transcendental sound and the form of the deity are My two eternal forms.”

*Śabda-brahma* means the sound and *param brahma* means Bhagavān. These are His two forms, and they are one. First we understand it on the basis of *śāstra* and on the authority of guru. And when we have *śraddhā* and follow the process, then we experience it. We must have faith in the words of *śāstra*. Since we are accustomed to thinking that a sound and the object denoted by it are two separate things, we do not seem to understand that they can be one—that is not our experience in the material world. But God and His Name are one.

If one chants without an offensive mentality and with trust, then one will realize that God and His Name are one, and the Name itself will reveal everything, including the form of Bhagavān, His qualities, and His pastimes. Everything is revealed by the Name, also one's own *svarūpa*. Now people are talking about *siddha-praṇālī* giving *svarūpa*. The original *ācāryas* and the Gosvāmīs weren't given *siddha-praṇālī* by anybody. Everything was revealed by the Name.

If we do not have faith in that, we make the Name secondary and something else prominent. Then one cannot realize the Name, form, etc., of Bhagavān. The Name itself is fully potent, and if one chants

without an offensive mentality, one will realize everything, because it is Bhagavān Himself. If we have an offensive mentality, such as considering the objects related to Bhagavān as material (*arce viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu-nara-matiḥ*), considering the guru as an ordinary human being, the water from Bhagavān's feet as ordinary water, the *śālagrāma-śilā* as a piece of stone, or His Name just as an ordinary sound, then we cannot realize anything.

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**QUESTION:** What is the relation among guru, *mantra*, deity, and *śāstra*?

**ANSWER:** The Name, *mantra*, *devatā* (the presiding deity of the *mantra*), and *śāstra* are all one, there is no difference between them.

a) Name: In the material world, every object has a name, and every sound denotes some object, activity, quality, or class—it points to something. Name, or *nāma*, basically means that when you want to understand or accept something with your mind, then there is a sound, and that sound relates to the object. The sound has potency in it, and there is a relationship between the object and the sound. The sound represents that particular object and that object is referred to as the meaning of the sound. When you have a word, it has a meaning that relates to the object to which it refers. The sound/name has the potency or power in it to denote that object, and the relationship between these two things is unbroken. If there is a name, then it has to have an object, and if there is an object, then it has some name that denotes it. This is how these two things are related.

However, in the spiritual world, this relationship is not same as in the material world. In the spiritual world, the name and object are not two separate things. It is not that you have a name, and that name leads you to the object by some power inherent in it. In the spiritual world, the name itself is the object, and the object and the name are one. So the material type of relationship between sound and object does not exist in the spiritual world.

b) *Mantra*: The Name of Bhagavān and the *mantra* are non-different. But the *mantra* has certain restrictions imposed on it by the sages, as to how it has to be chanted or used. In the Name there are no restrictions, but in the *mantra* there are restrictions based on certain qualifications. Like one of the restrictions is that the *mantra* is very secret. It is given by the guru to the disciple in the ear, and after that it is kept completely secret.

For instance, if somebody's mother has an affair with a person other than his father, then he would not like to speak about it, because it is such an embarrassing thing. He would keep it as a secret. The *mantra* has to be guarded like that. Therefore it is to be chanted only in the mind without moving the lips or the tongue, so that no one else hears it. It is completely private. The potency of the *mantra* is in secrecy. If it is revealed to others, it loses its power. That is one of the restrictions imposed on by the sages. But that restriction does not exist on the Name. Therefore the Name can be chanted even loudly.

c) *Devatā*: The *devatā* (the deity of the *mantra*) and the Name are one.

d) *Śāstra*: The *śāstra* is nothing but an explanation of the *mantra* or the Name. The meaning of the *mantra* is to surrender to Bhagavān and serve Him in a loving relationship. However, just to explain this, *śāstra* describes so many different histories, stories, and gives different types of logic. This is because we are unable to immediately grasp it. The essence of the *śāstra* or the *mantra* is *uttama-bhakti*, or pure loving devotional service to Bhagavān. That is explained in the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Bhāgavatam*, the four verses spoken by Bhagavān to Brahmā. It says that *bhakti* is the only thing to be enquired after, and there is nothing else to be known. This means that *uttama-bhakti* is actually the essence. The *śāstra* is also Bhagavān Himself in sound form, as are the Name and the *mantra*.

e) *Guru*: Then there is *guru*, who is also one with Bhagavān. Bhagavān manifests in the form of *guru* to uplift you from ignorance. No one can free oneself from ignorance by one's own effort. One takes the *mantra* from the *guru*, and after taking it, one keeps it secret and chants it.

Next, the question arises, how is it that after receiving the *mantra* from a qualified *guru* and chanting it, one still does not realize? This is because the qualifications which are required for the *mantra* do not exist in that person. But that should not be the cause of losing faith in it. Rather, one should come to that required level, and then one will understand.

The *mantra* here, which we are speaking about, is the *mantra* of Bhagavān. It has 18 syllables and five parts in it, as explained in the *Gopāla-tāpanī-upaniṣad*. This manifestation of the *mantra* is for understanding Bhagavān, because Bhagavān is not available to our senses in the conditioned state. In our materially conditioned state, we do not perceive Bhagavān in the same manner as we perceive

sound and corresponding objects in the material world. The *mantra* is the facility to perceive Him. Bhagavān graciously manifests in His sound form. “Manifests” means that this *mantra* is His form—*mantra-mūrti*. His *mūrti*, or form, is in the shape of the *mantra* only. So in this way, God becomes available in this world. And if one takes to this process with faith, not transgressing the rules or making offenses, then one will realize God.

This is the whole process—the basic essence of the process of *bhakti*. How are they (guru and *mantra*) related to each other? Basically they are different manifestations of the same thing.

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**QUESTION:** It seems that there is a general and a specific meaning of the *mantra*. The general meaning is the prayer to Bhagavān that one is a servant of Bhagavān and praying to be engaged in His service, but the *mantra* may have specific meanings. How is this revealed?

**ANSWER:** There is no such thing as a general meaning or a specific meaning nor do different *mantras* have different meanings. The ultimate meaning is the same, which is *uttama-bhakti* to Bhagavān, and realizing Him. That is the only meaning of the *mantra*. But because people have their own desires, they can impose different meanings onto it.

In the common vernacular, words have their primary and secondary meanings, but that is not true about the *mantra*.

The main point is, as already explained, that there is no difference between the sound and the object to which it refers. Therefore, the *mantra* is only taken in its primary sense, and there is no secondary sense. If you take the secondary sense, then you are making up your own meaning.

*vācyatvaṁ vācakatvaṁca deva-tan-mantrayoriha  
abhedenocyate brahman tattva-vidbhir-vicāritaḥ*

“Those who know the meaning of the *mantra* say that there is no difference between the *mantra* and its *deva*, or the deity.” (*Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra*, quoted in *Bhakti Sandarbha*, 190)

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**QUESTION:** When we cannot concentrate during chanting, it means that we are committing offenses. On the other side, we cannot do atonement for offenses, so what to do?

**ANSWER:** After taking *dīkṣā*, one should carefully avoid offenses. That is the main thing. Among the offenses, the major ones are disrespecting or disobeying the guru (*guru-avajānā*) and not having faith in *śāstra* (*śruti-śāstra-nindanam*). These are the basic offenses, and all the offenses stem from these two. If one disrespects the guru or considers him an ordinary person (*guruṣu naramatiḥ*), then he or she will not accept any instruction from him. The tendency is not to take instructions from somebody who is an ordinary person. When one does not accept the *śāstra*, then one will manipulate it. *Bhakti*, however, is based on *śāstric* knowledge, and if one does not trust it or manipulates it, one will not reach the destination. These two offenses must be carefully avoided.

When one takes initiation, it happens by the inspiration of God. This means He is willing to accept you. Offenses are therefore dangerous after one takes initiation and does not follow *śāstra* or guru. These offenses must be very, very carefully avoided; otherwise there is no other chance for the person.

When one considers the Name of Bhagavān as an ordinary sound and does not have faith that the *nāma* and Bhagavān are non-different, there is no possibility of that person to progress. So avoid offenses and continue chanting, even if you cannot concentrate on it. Do your best to concentrate, and keep at it. If you are unsuccessful, it is not a problem; that is not an offense.

**QUESTION:** I heard that the Name is the internal potency and when one is initiated into a proper *paramparā*, then its power can manifest. Previously I was initiated by someone who was not from a proper *paramparā*, and I felt that this had some effect on me. Is it that when one gets initiated into the *paramparā*, one is eligible to get the full effect, but not before?

**ANSWER:** Nothing can obstruct the power of the Name. Whether before or after initiation, the Name always has the same power. Yet, if a person who is interested in material things, such as followers, wealth, material position, enjoyment, and bodily pleasures, takes the Name, then the Name does not manifest its power. Rather, chanting becomes an offense. Whether such a situation occurs before or after initiation, the Name is unhappy. *Bhakti-devī* must be happy with our chanting.

After initiation, if one desires material things, then the offense is greater, because now one commits the offense knowingly. In addition, one is disobeying *sāstra* and disrespecting the guru, because that is not their instruction. Therefore, instead of achieving the proper result, one will get an undesirable reaction. The Name manifests its effect if one does it properly; otherwise there is a reaction. Chanting is never fruitless. Whether the result is good or bad, a result will occur. This is so because the Name has power in it. It is like a powerful medicine that cures the disease when taken as recommended. If it is not taken as recommended, there will be some undesirable effect. In this instance, the undesirable effect is that one will become more and more materialistic. When one chants the Name, Bhagavān is attracted to the chanter, “*nāma vyāharaṇam viṣṇor.*”

*sarveṣām apy aghavatām  
idam eva suniṣkṛtam  
nāma-vyāharaṇam viṣṇor  
yatas tad-viṣayā matiḥ*

“This is the only supreme atonement for all sinners, that one utters the name of Śrī Viṣṇu by which a person’s mind turns towards Bhagavān, and Bhagavān’s attention is drawn towards the person who chants.” (SB 6.2.10)

When one takes the Name of Śrī Viṣṇu, Bhagavān’s mind or attention is attracted to such a person. If the person has material ideas or desires some material benefit, whether it is wealth, position, or followers, then Bhagavān becomes displeased with the chanting and an undesirable effect or reaction manifests.

It is just like a business in which you offer your labor and serve. Your interest is not in serving but in the result. Your interest is not ultimately satisfactory to the person whom you are serving, because he knows that your interest is not in him. He does not mistake your service as an expression of love, but knows this to be merely business. If his interest is to have a loving relationship, he will not be happy with such work being done for money. Similarly, when you render service by chanting, and yet remain interested in something other than the Name, then it means that you are just using the Name for attaining some material goal, and this is displeasing to Bhagavān. Instead of pleasing Bhagavān by chanting, you irritate Him, although the Name is dear to Him. Whether it is before or after initiation, this mentality is offensive.

Generally, after taking initiation, one's actions are more offensive, because before one is initiated, one acts in ignorance, and one may still have some fear in one's mind that one may be doing something wrong. Once one is initiated, however, one becomes more fearless and commits more offense. Therefore, the result does not manifest as desired.

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was specifically compiled to explain the glory of the Name. It explains how the Name is so powerful that even if chanted in ignorance or if a semblance of the Name is chanted, it can free one from all attachments, as described in the history of Ajāmila in the Sixth Canto. As soon as Ajāmila named his son "Nārāyaṇa," he became free from all attachments, even though he was not chanting the Name of God. Even if the Name is chanted as a resemblance (*nāmābhāsa*), it also yields the result. Such is the power of the name. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* explains all of this.

Generally, after taking *dīkṣā*, the disciple does not like the guru; rather he disrespects the guru. Therefore, instead of achieving the desired result, the disciple receives an undesirable reaction—namely, he becomes interested only in material things. Why this happens—I always wonder about it. Right from the beginning, I have tried to understand why a person, after taking *dīkṣā*, does not like the guru. This is the outcome of offense, and nothing else. This needs to be deliberated upon by the disciple. The Name has the power, and Ajāmila was not even initiated. He did not take any *dīkṣā*, and yet he was completely free from any attachment, because of the power of the Holy Name. So the power of the Name is always there.

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**QUESTION:** Is it really important that we have the exact pronunciation of the Name? And when we chant, do we have to listen to the Name, or talk to Kṛṣṇa, or what is the proper mood? And how can we best chant?

**ANSWER:** There is no requirement that the Name has to be pronounced properly. As it was said earlier, there are no rules for chanting the Name. If one is chanting Vedic *mantras*, then they have to be chanted properly, with proper pronunciation and intonation, but not in the case of the Name. The only instruction is that one should not do anything which is displeasing to Bhagavān. That means that one should not see the Name as something inferior or as a useless thing. Rather, one should have respect for it, because



it is non-different from Bhagavān. The same respect that is given to Bhagavān should also be shown to the Name. If one has a disrespectful mentality towards the Name, thinking that it is not powerful or that it is material, then naturally the Name does not manifest its power. If one chants with such a mentality, one will get the contrary result. One will become more and more interested in material pleasures and lose interest in spirituality.

There is no restriction in chanting. Even chanting attentively or remembering the meaning is not a compulsory rule. The main principle is that it has to be chanted with great respect, and one should avoid thinking that the Name is material, not important, or not powerful. Even if one is unable to concentrate, that is also not a problem, because the tongue is chanting it.

*tunḍe tāṇḍavinī ratim vitanute tuṇḍāvalī-labdhaye  
kaṇa-kroḍa-kaḍambinī ghaṭayate kaṇārbudebhyaḥ sprhām  
cetaḥ-prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate sarvendriyāṇām kṛtim  
no jāne janitā kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayī*

“Those who have experienced the Name, say that this is the sweetest thing, which means the most attractive thing. When I chant, I desire millions of tongues, and when I hear, I desire millions of ears. There is nothing which compares with the happiness one gets by chanting. I do not know how much sweetness there is in these two syllables, *kṛṣ-ṇa*.” (Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Vidagdha Mādhava* 1.15)

This is the experience of great devotees of the Name, so one should have faith in it. Not that one chants without faith. When there is no faith, there is dislike, disrespect, or even hatred for chanting. If, however, one has *śraddhā*, then one will see the ultimate result.

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**QUESTION:** How did Ajāmila attain the spiritual world without taking *dīkṣā*? It is not mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam* that Ajāmila took *dīkṣā* in Haridwāra?

**ANSWER:** This incident shows that if a person is free from offenses, he can attain liberation, even by *nāmābhāsa*. But this is not something you see very often. This story is there to illustrate the power of *nāmābhāsa*.

**QUESTION:** Would it then also be possible without a guru, theoretically?



ANSWER: In theory it is possible. The Holy Name has this power. However, Ajāmila also got the association of the Viṣṇudūtas and listened to their dialogue. This inspired him to execute devotion, and realizing the greatness of the Holy Name, he left his home for Haridwāra. Ajāmila was not an offender of the Name, although he was a sinner. Therefore it would be possible.

QUESTION: Once you mentioned that when Ajāmila was chanting “Nārāyaṇa” with affection, because of his affection for his son, he was awarded a special position. What was this special position?

ANSWER: Ajāmila got close association with Nārāyaṇa.

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QUESTION: Should one chant during favorable times, or should one be able to chant at any time?

ANSWER: If possible, you should chant at a time that is more *sāttvika*, because then the mind is more stable.

QUESTION: If the mind is very agitated, should we still chant?

ANSWER: If the mind is too agitated, then wait till it calms down. You cannot do *japa* with a disturbed mind.

QUESTION: Is it not an offense if one does not chant because of these reasons?

ANSWER: You should plan your day in such a way that you can chant at a favorable time, when the mind is more stable. But do not avoid chanting, because that would be whimsical.

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QUESTION: Sometimes we are not able to chant properly. Could Mahārāja give some advice to us how to chant properly?

ANSWER: I have already given it many times, you should try to chant with a concentrated mind. You have to chant with proper attention. Your mind should not be going anywhere. Just moving the *japa* beads is not good, if the mind is not chanting. However, if the mind wanders, which will happen, then do not feel guilty. Continue to chant sincerely.

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**QUESTION:** If one has difficulties with concentrating during chanting, what should one do?

**ANSWER:** Concentrate. Try to concentrate. You are supposed to concentrate on the sound of the Name, and if you are unable to concentrate, then work to develop concentration. If you are not successful in concentrating, do not give up and do not be anxious. Just try your best.

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**QUESTION:** How can we figure out how many rounds we should chant, because sometimes it is difficult, either one is taken by false enthusiasm, or one is lazy, or one can't chant that much?

**ANSWER:** If you feel enthusiastic or you like to chant, then do more chanting, and if the mind is disturbed or running away, then do less chanting.

**QUESTION:** Oh, that is possible?

**ANSWER:** Yes. If the mind is too disturbed, then you should not chant.

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**QUESTION:** How do we understand Śrī Caitanya's chanting with the animals in the Jhārikhaṇḍa forest? Shall we understand it allegorically or did it actually happen in that way?

**ANSWER:** When Bhagavān comes and performs His pastimes, He actually does not perform pastimes with material people or material beings. Bhagavān comes with His own people, His associates, and is situated in His own abode. He acts to educate the people of this world about His power, so that people become interested. Therefore, He acts in a mystical way.

These animals were His associates. He enacted His pastimes with them, so that people could understand that He is the Supreme Person and can make even animals sing and dance. In this way, people follow His path.

The idea is to follow what Bhagavān says. Since people are not surrendered, it is not very easy for them to follow somebody. Therefore, He has to exhibit some magical power, so that suspicious

people would consider Him as superior and therefore take to His instructions.

QUESTION: Would it then be possible for anybody else to do such a thing?

ANSWER: If Bhagavān empowers him.

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QUESTION: Should one chant *nāma* to give mercy to trees or animals?

ANSWER: The Name is non-different from Bhagavān. If one commits an offense to His Name, then one will fall down, because the Name is His best friend. One of the offenses is to make a faithless or disinterested person hear the Name. That is not very pleasing to Bhagavān. It is not a very respectful thing to do, and one should not misuse the Name like that. For example, people broadcast *kīrtana* with loudspeakers so that others may hear it. But there may be people who do not like the *kīrtana*, and this becomes an offense to the Holy Name on the part of the people who are performing the *kīrtana*.

Furthermore, how many people who heard *nāma kīrtana* have changed their lives? So much *kīrtana* is going on all around, so many loudspeakers, but how many people have changed their lives?

QUESTION: So one should be more concerned that one is chanting offenselessly?

ANSWER: Yes, and you should chant for your own sake.

QUESTION: Are the trees benefiting if one is chanting?

ANSWER: That is not your concern. Think about your own benefit and do not bother about the trees. The story of Mahāprabhu chanting with the animals is there to illustrate the power of the Holy Name. It is not to be imitated. It is not a prescription for people who can hardly chant with proper attention and have no attachment to chanting. How can you benefit others when you have not realized it yourself?

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**QUESTION:** Should I chant a certain amount of rounds on my *japa* beads, because formerly I was told to do so?

**ANSWER:** One should chant any *mantra* a minimum of ten times. That is the minimum, and more than that you can chant as much as you like. But it should be chanted with single-minded attention. Not that one is chanting and one's mind is going somewhere else. One should chant with a peaceful and concentrated mind, and one should concentrate on the *mantra*—the sound and the words.

If one decides to fix a target of perhaps 16 rounds, 17 rounds, or even one *lakh* (100,000) of *mantras*, then one would automatically start doing it fast, and it goes like a train. One is just trying to finish it off, and that is meaningless. But every *mantra* should be chanted with proper concentration for a minimum of ten times.

**QUESTION:** This means ten rounds?

**ANSWER:** No, ten *mantras*. Don't laugh, you cannot chant even one properly as prescribed! I want to see that you chant it properly, even if just once. Show me how you chant it even once, because you are thinking that ten is too little and feeling dissatisfied. Show me that you can chant it properly once.

**QUESTION:** This means when we realize that we are becoming inattentive, then we should stop chanting?

**ANSWER:** Yes, you have to chant properly. Why chant inattentively? Chanting should not be done as if getting rid of a burden.

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**QUESTION:** For me it is more difficult to chant on my beads *japa* than to sing. Is it necessary to chant *japa* or can I just sing?

**ANSWER:** We already said that you should chant at least 10 times, that is the minimum.

**QUESTION:** And this I can't do singing?

**ANSWER:** At least ten times you have to chant on your beads.



**QUESTION:** Some Vaiṣṇavas have a thread after the eighth bead of the *japa-mala*. They say it is absolutely necessary to have it. Is this stated in the *śāstras*?

**ANSWER:** It is just a speculation. There are many explanations people give about the *japa-mala*. The *japa* is just there to count the number of Names one is chanting—nothing else.

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**QUESTION:** Sanātana Gosvāmī describes three types of *japa*: *vācika*, *mānasika*, and *upāṁśu*. Is one considered better than the other?

**ANSWER:** Chanting with the mind is superior to the others, because everything is dependent on your mind. If chanting is *vācika*, or through speech only, then your mind may not be there. If you are chanting it with your mind (*mānasika*), then there is no possibility of your mind going anywhere.

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**QUESTION:** What does *puraścaraṇa* mean?

**ANSWER:** It is a process of chanting the *mantra* with a motive.

## 20. Charity

**QUESTION:** What is the position of a Vaiṣṇava when it comes to giving charity? Should one discriminate in terms of the subject of charity or should all charity be given to Kṛṣṇa? There are those who say that giving in charity is a mundane thing, because charity simply affects a person's material body and therefore it is sentimental to give in charity. There are also those who say that if you are a *grhastha* and have the means, you should give charity, because it cultivates *sattva*, compassion, and so on.

**ANSWER:** First we should understand the definition of charity. Charity means that you own some object, and then you give up your ownership and establish somebody else as the owner of that object. This is called charity. Its purpose is to help the donor that he may give up attachment for material things. There are a lot

of descriptions in the *śāstras* about charity, because people have attachments. Charity is prescribed to bring people slowly from the *pravṛtti-mārga* to *nivṛtti-mārga*.

To begin with, the description of charity is all *sakāma*, or materially motivated, such as, if you give one Rupee you will get 1000 Rupees in return, and so on. Further on, it is said that you should give charity without expecting anything in return. Then there is a description that charity should be given to a qualified person.

Then there are descriptions as to what makes a person qualified to receive charity. A *brāhmaṇa* is qualified, and among them also those who know the Vedas are more qualified, because they know the meaning of the Vedas and are qualified to teach it. Vaiṣṇavas, however, are more qualified than *brāhmaṇas*, and the guru is the most qualified Vaiṣṇava. Ultimately, the most qualified is God Himself. He is the topmost person to which charity should be given.

All these things, worship of the deity, taking *dīkṣā*, etc., are all charities, because it involves giving something. Even when you are performing *ārātika*, you are offering something. The purpose is to realize that one is not the owner of anything. Therefore it is also said that after giving in charity, one should not sing songs about it: "I gave this much!" because if one does it, one will develop pride, and this is useless. It defeats the very purpose of charity because the purpose is to give up attachment. If one is keeping any pride on account of giving in charity, then such charity does not serve the purpose. Therefore, charity is to be done secretly.

God is the ultimate object of charity. Charity is recommended in the *śāstra* because everybody has to be kept alive. So other living entities are also given charity. Therefore, in householder life there are so many prescriptions for giving food or doing sacrifices and distributing food along with it. All these *utsavas* or festivals always involve distribution of food.

QUESTION: And the ultimate charity is to surrender oneself?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What if you are approached by beggars and poor people?

ANSWER: That I have already described. There are gradations in giving charity. It does not say, you should not give, but there are degrees of charity. Charity is given to all living beings, but the

levels are as follows: *brāhmaṇas*, then *brāhmaṇas* who can recite the Vedas, then *brāhmaṇas* who know the meaning of the Vedas and teach to others, then Vaiṣṇavas, then the guru, and ultimately God.

QUESTION: But what if someone approaches you on the street?

ANSWER: You can give something.

QUESTION: You should give something just because they approach, right?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: And what is the effect of that?

ANSWER: I have already explained what the effect is. The effect is that you free yourself of your wealth and attachment, but that only if it is done with a proper mood, otherwise you may develop pride.

## 21. Cheating

QUESTION: What does cheating mean? Does this mean to have other motivation than to please guru and Kṛṣṇa, or does it mean that one is hiding one's real motivation?

ANSWER: Whether you hide it or you do not hide, having any motive other than to please guru and Kṛṣṇa is cheating. If you hide your real motive, then you are doubly cheating.

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QUESTION: How can we get rid of the cheating propensity?

ANSWER: Just give it up. Some people ask, "I tell lies; how do I avoid it?" The answer is, do not tell lies. This cheating propensity comes from the identification with the body. So give up that identification.

QUESTION: It does not come with the purification?

ANSWER: That is the purification. What else is purification? Taking *dīkṣā* means understanding the proper identification, otherwise, you identify with the body.

**QUESTION:** Is it something one does gradually?

**ANSWER:** That is up to you. Just like people who smoke can give it up in one minute, "I will not smoke anymore," or can give it up gradually. That is up to the individual person.

**QUESTION:** Is the ability to do that dependent on the faith?

**ANSWER:** Yes, obviously, if you have the understanding. The cheating propensity comes from ignorance. So if you have proper understanding, then your ignorance is removed. Then you give it up if you want or at least you make an endeavor to do so.

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**QUESTION:** What can be done to stop the cheating mentality?

**ANSWER:** It is just like me asking you not to tell lies. Then you ask me, how can I stop? Do not tell lies. That's all. Be truthful.

It is the same thing with cheating. Cheating means not being truthful. A person knows himself if he is truthful or not. There is nothing that has to be done separately to be honest and truthful.

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**QUESTION:** Why did Kṛṣṇa allow fighters like Drona, Bhīṣma, Karna, or Duryodhana to be killed with unfair means and not according to *kṣatriya* rules?

**ANSWER:** Irreligious people have to be subdued, and religion has to be established. That is the purpose of Kṛṣṇa. If they have to be removed by seemingly wrong or cheating ways, there is nothing wrong with that, because irreligious people use unfair means all the time. They do not care for religious principles if the principles do not suit their agenda. If pious people have to counter them while following religious principles, it may not be possible to defeat them. If they are not defeated, they will destroy the religious people along with religion. The Kauravas tricked and had captured the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas. It had to be taken back from the wrong hands, either by directly fighting or even by trickery. That is what Kṛṣṇa did.

Before the war, Kṛṣṇa went as a messenger of peace to mediate and ask the Kauravas to return the Pāṇḍavas' kingdom. The Kauravas had forcibly kept the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas and would not agree



to enter into a truce. As the Kauravas wanted to fight, the Pāṇḍavas were forced to fight and kill the Kauravas by all means available. With or without punishment, they had to take the kingdom back. The Kauravas would not agree to return the kingdom without a fight. So they had no choice but to kill.

Another thing is that people generally want to have *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa. All the Kauravas saw Kṛṣṇa, but nobody's heart changed by seeing Him. Therefore, it is not important to have Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*. What is important is to understand Him.

**QUESTION:** So if someone cheats us, do we have the right to cheat back?

**ANSWER:** At least, if he has taken your rights, you can get your rights back. You do not have to cheat. If somebody captures your house, then you get it back.

## 22. Children

**QUESTION:** What is the bare minimum that parents should give to the child in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

**ANSWER:** The first thing that children should be taught is how to respect their parents. The parents have given birth to them, taken care of them, and supplied all of their needs. Therefore, the children should be grateful. If they cannot be grateful to their parents, they are completely frivolous and they will not listen to anybody. There is no possibility that they will accept God or any other authority. If the children cannot realize, accept, and be grateful to the parents who are caring for them directly, then what to speak of God, who is not physically present, yet acting for the welfare of everybody?

Basic education starts from respecting the parents. Therefore, in the Vedic tradition they were taught, *mātr devo bhava pitr devo bhava guru devo bhava*, meaning that one should respect the mother, father, and guru, just as one would respect God. This is the fundamental principle which they have to realize. They should understand it and feel it. It is not that they are just forced into it mechanically, but rather, they should feel it.

In modern education, there is no such understanding of respect to another. You yourself do your own thing. The whole existence is just for your own sake, and you have no responsibility towards

anybody. This is modern education, which is just geared towards sex and pleasure.

There are two paths: *sat-mārga* and *asat-mārga*, the path of reality and the improper path.

a) *Sat-mārga*: Vedic culture was established for the purpose of knowing the Absolute Reality. It is not a lighthearted thing. Marriage was not just about enjoying sex life, but it was for producing children who would worship the forefathers and ultimately God. By chanting of the Vedic *mantras* during the marriage ceremony, although husband and wife were separate, their hearts were united. They had trust in the Vedic *mantras* and in the ceremonies. They took a vow during the marriage ceremony to be one. And for the rest of their lives, they would not get divorced. They begot children for propagating *dharma*. This is the *sat-mārga*.

The children were educated in *dharma*, and the *saṁskāras* were inculcated. The husband and wife were not producing children as a by-product of sex. They would undergo the proper ceremony of conception (*garbhādhāna*), as this would create *saṁskāras* in the child, and then the children would be born properly. Household life is the foundation of society. Whether somebody becomes a *sādhu*, *sannyāsī*, or anything else, he has to come from household life, as there is no other way. Therefore, the basic foundation has to be laid properly, starting in the family.

b) *Asat-mārga*: If, however, there is no proper foundation in household life, then the *sādhus* who come out of such families will also be corrupt, and then the whole society will become corrupt. Now this system is broken, and everywhere we can see the results of this. There is the so-called love-marriage, which is ultimately based on pleasure. The outcome of this is that the wife does not respect the husband. There is no question that the husband is to be respected, *patir devo bhava*. But in modern times, the wife considers her husband to be a servant, and therefore, when somebody tells her that the husband is worshipable, she laughs. It is a joke for her. Nowadays marriages are done just as a social license. The whole marriage arrangement and the money spent to give a feast to people is just like giving a bribe to everybody, so that nobody creates an objection to the boy and girl living together. Of course, in the West you do not need a license; therefore, you can live together even without getting married and do whatever you want.

In these situations it cannot be expected from the children born from such marriages to have any religious feelings. When they grow up, they will also have the same frivolous thoughts and suffer the consequences.

For example, there was a person who was living with me for many years, studying under me, but then he left me and had a love-marriage. Now he is completely entangled. This person's brother-in-law (sister's husband) came and told me that he had entered into a love marriage. His father also had a love marriage. What could one therefore expect from the son? He had to get the same *saṁskāras*.

If the parents do not conduct themselves properly, then these *saṁskāras* will be passed on to their children. If the parents are frivolous and married just for sex, then the son will also learn, "The goal of life is sex, the whole world is for my sake, and I can eat anything." Now people eat all sorts of things. Men are even eating human flesh. This is *asat-mārga*.

The Vedic education, however, is to bring people to the *sat-mārga*, because only that will bring sanity in society and protect the creation of God.

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**QUESTION:** It is said that the *grhastha āśrama* without a son is like a desert. On the other hand, it is mentioned in SB 5.5.18 that one should not become mother, father, guru, etc., if one cannot liberate or bring the children or disciple to God.

*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt  
pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt  
daivam na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān  
na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum*

"One who cannot deliver one's subject from material bondage (*saṁsāra*), should not become a guru, a relative, a father, a mother, a *devatā*, or a husband."

What is the duty and the qualification for the *grhastha āśrama* to have children?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is a separate path, and *varṇāśrama* is a separate path. *Bhakti* is for the worship of Bhagavān, and *varṇāśrama* aims at *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.

In *bhakti*, one is dedicated for the sake of service, and everybody has the qualification to take to this. There is no restriction that one should be unmarried or married. There is nothing like that. When marriage is performed, Vedic *mantras* are chanted, which means that husband and wife are united. The purpose of marriage is to produce children who can worship the forefathers (*śrāddha*) and continue the lineage. If one is a devotee, children should be begotten so that they can be devotees and worship Bhagavān. For a devotee, his goal is to serve Bhagavān under all circumstances. If he is married, then the children should be begotten only for this purpose.

This restriction, which says that one should not be father, mother, etc., is for the people in *varṇāśrama*, so that they should not just engage in sex life. Rather, they should produce children who will take to spiritual life (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*).

If one is a devotee, then naturally he does all his actions for the sake of Bhagavān. So there is no injunction like that for him. This verse (SB 5.5.18) is speaking about *pravṛtti-mārga*. In the *nivṛtti-mārga*, one is naturally inclined towards devotion. Therefore, there is no sense in referring to that verse if one is on the *nivṛtti-mārga*. If one is on the *nivṛtti-mārga*, whether householder or not, his goal is only *parārtha* (service to Bhagavān), and not *svārtha* (working for the body). Therefore, if he is married and produces children, then the goal should be for his children to become devotees and worship Bhagavān.

## 23. Compassion

**QUESTION:** How important is compassion for a Vaiṣṇava? Is it part of the *vaiṣṇava-dharma*? In Christianity it is very much stressed.

**ANSWER:** The *dharma* for Vaiṣṇavas is continuous service to Kṛṣṇa, *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. This service has to be done in a favorable mood (*ānukūlyena*) and without any other motive than to satisfy Kṛṣṇa (*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*).

This compassion, as we see in modern Christianity, is not without motive. They want to propagate Christianity, and therefore they are caring for uneducated and poor people who are easier to convert.

One should practice *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*, doing favorable service, without motives. First you practice it with the guru, and then you



can also serve others, like the deities, cows, *brāhmaṇas*, etc., without a motive. Service without motive is not possible without a guru.

Unfortunately, people do not understand the purpose behind *dīkṣā*. Unqualified people have entered the path of *bhakti* and spoiled it. Therefore it appears that the devotees do not have mercy.

**QUESTION:** Does this mean that a Vaiṣṇava does not open a hospital or distribute food to the needy?

**ANSWER:** All these activities are always done with a motive, to make some business. Doing charity without any motive is possible only if one has learned it from a qualified guru and is working under his guidance. Otherwise, these activities are always materially motivated. This may not be obvious to a common person.

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**QUESTION:** What does it mean to have compassion for the soul?

**ANSWER:** The essence of *vaiṣṇava-dharma* is that a Vaiṣṇava is happy if others are happy and engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa.

Bhagavān is compassionate, and so are His devotees, because a worshipper has the qualities of the worshipable. The heart of a devotee is compassionate and free from any motive, just as a cow behaves toward her calf or parents toward their child. The devotee is free from desire for recognition (*pratiṣṭhā*). He does not hanker for name, fame, glory, and the like. The main qualification for compassion is to serve the guru and give up one's independent nature; otherwise, there are always some hidden motives, like the desire to become famous for one's charity.

People do not make any effort to understand the Vaiṣṇava religion. Everybody is talking about *kīrtana*, having big bead bags, but they do not want to hear about the qualifications (*trṇād api sunīcena*) of a Vaiṣṇava. Their pride will be the cause for selfish behavior and their fall down. People take *dīkṣā*, but afterwards they do not need the guru anymore. They criticize him or think that the guru is dependent on them and their money. But a Vaiṣṇava is not proud. He possesses all the good qualities, but he is not proud of them.

## 24. Competition—Cooperation

**QUESTION:** In the material world, there is always competition. However, in *bhakti-mārga*, we are supposed to cooperate. How can we develop cooperation?

**ANSWER:** Ignorance is the root cause of competition in the material world. The basic ignorance, which everybody is endowed with, has no beginning (*anādi avidyā*), and that ignorance is one's attachment to the material body. One competes, because one thinks that the development of material progress is the basis of life. There is an envious nature behind it. The solution to this is the path of devotion. Devotion is based on surrender to God. There is no independent or separatist mentality, such as, "I am different," and "I own something, but you do not have it." In *bhakti*, therefore, there is natural cooperation because one remains humble. The more one remains humble and surrendered, the more one progresses on this path. In the material world, the opposite is true. Therefore one has to struggle and compete, and then we become natural enemies.

If one is simple, humble, and cooperative, then there is no envy. Only to solve this material problem, Śrī Caitanya has propagated *uttama-bhakti*—pure devotion to Bhagavān. In *bhakti*, there is one complete unit, and Kṛṣṇa is the center. He is the worshipable Lord and everybody is His servant. Therefore, everybody cooperates on the basis of this idea. Then there is no struggle and competition.

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**QUESTION:** What is cooperation (*saha-yoga*) and how does one behave in a cooperative way?

**ANSWER:** There are two paths, *nivṛtti-mārga* and *pravṛtti-mārga*, which I explained earlier.

In *pravṛtti-mārga*, or the path of attachment, one is attached to one's body, which one considers as one's own self. Therefore it is called *svārtha*, or the path of selfishness. Although the body is not the self, one considers the body as the self and works for the good or for the pleasure of the body and the senses. In *pravṛtti-mārga*, one cooperates with people to whom one is attached in relation to the body, whether it is wife, children, or anyone else. That cooperation is natural. There is no injunction needed for that. Nobody has to tell us to do that, as it is natural because of material attachment.

And then there is the *nivṛtti-mārga*, or the path of detachment, which is for *parārtha* (*para* means the Supreme Being). This means working for Bhagavān's sake. In that, there is an injunction, because there is no natural liking to perform it. So the scriptures inform or give injunctions, because it is only through the scriptures that one knows this path. Otherwise, one works only because of selfishness or attachment to the body.

As one works for one's material attachments, in the same way, one should work for the sake of Bhagavān with one's mind, body, and words. In the material world, ultimately one is working very hard and fully dedicated for the sake of sex life, and there is no training or preaching required for that. For spiritual life or for the sake of Bhagavān, one has to act with a similar attitude. The example of material attachment is given so that one can understand how one has to cooperate.

Actually, cooperation is just another word for doing *ānukūlya*, or acting favorably. *Ānukūlya* is not understood by people, therefore another word—cooperation—is used, so that people can get some understanding. Otherwise, cooperation means doing favorable action for the pleasure of Bhagavān. Just as one tries to act pleasurably for the sake of the body or for people to whom one has bodily attachment, one should try to act for the sake of pleasing Bhagavān. This is the meaning of cooperation. It means to assist the guru in his service to Bhagavān.

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**QUESTION:** What should be the mentality in order to cooperate in *sevā* with the guru and the devotees?

**ANSWER:** If one is sincere and simple, one can cooperate. If one is not simple, one will play tricks and not cooperate. So, one should be simple and straightforward.

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**QUESTION:** In the last *darśana* you explained that cooperation is a synonym for *ānukūlya*, favorable service. Yet, in the *darśanas* before, I understood that you said that we do not even know how to do favorable service, so in the beginning we should try to cooperate. Now is cooperation a synonym or ...?

ANSWER: It is the same thing, but since you do not understand what *ānukūlya* is, the word cooperation is used, assuming that at least you know what cooperation means.

QUESTION: But *ānukūlya* means more than cooperation, right?

ANSWER: Yes.

## 25. Confession

QUESTION: Can we ask the guru questions about daily life and personal problems, too?

ANSWER: You can ask anything, whether it is your daily life, practical problems, or philosophical questions.

QUESTION: When we have a personal problem, are we supposed to confess it?

ANSWER: (jokingly) Yes, on a Sunday. On this path of *uttama-bhakti*, there is no such thing as confession because this is a path of simplicity, straightforwardness, and no deception. It is a path based on knowledge, and not on mysticism or ignorance.

If one accepts a guru with proper understanding and knowledge, then his behavior is straightforward toward the guru. The disciple can accept whatever is needed for the body. If you want to eat, then eat; or if you need sleep, then sleep. There is no need to engage in forbidden activities, nor is there provision that if one does a forbidden act, then one comes and confesses. Confession is just a type of business.

For example, here in Vṛndāvana the local *paṇḍās* (priests) have this business. Many people come, especially from Bengal, and accept local *paṇḍās* as their priests (*tīrtha paṇḍās*). They will come, pay obeisances, and give some *dakṣiṇā* (donation), and the *paṇḍā* says, "Whatever sins you have committed, put them on my feet, and you are relieved." This is business—getting rid of sins by paying some money.

Everybody has the right to perform actions, but it is only the Paramātmā who has the authority to give the result. We do not even have the power to give our *karma* to somebody or to take someone's



sins and "take care of it," as the *paṇḍās* say they can. It is simply fooling ignorant people so as to make money. The *paṇḍā* is not *Paramātmā*.

If confession is done, it will just become a habit. For example, somebody approached his guru and asked him, "If I release gas during worship, what shall I do?" The guru said, "You should change clothes, wash your hands and feet, put on clean clothes, and then do the worship." Then the disciple said, "If I do it again, then what shall I do?" The guru said, "Again do the same thing." "And if I do it a third time?" asked the disciple. "Again do the same thing," replied the guru. The idea behind it is that the disciple is trying to get the guru to say, "Actually it is alright, there's no need for you to change your clothes." The person is trying to get a sanction for doing a wrong act.

However, this path is not like that. It is a path of truthfulness. That is how one should remain truthful. Otherwise, when you are confessing, you think, "Well, I am now relieved from the mistake I made," and then you will go and do it again, and then you come back and confess again. It will just become a trend. This type of business is not allowed on this path of *bhakti*. While it is prevalent on all other paths, whether in Hinduism or Christianity, it is not so for *uttama-bhakti*.

## 26. Cows

**QUESTION:** In the West, cows are kept in mass production and are fed even with animal powder. Can we offer their milk and milk products to Bhagavān or should devotees in the West become vegans?

**ANSWER:** No, you should not offer this kind of milk to Kṛṣṇa. The milk should not be from cows that are fed with chemicals or animal powder. Other milk and milk products from cows which are kept naturally (organic) and fed with plants can be offered.

**QUESTION:** But cows from organic farms are also ultimately slaughtered. Are we not supporting this slaughter by buying even organic milk products?

ANSWER: No, you do not get the *karma* for slaughtering, because it is not you who gave the order to slaughter the cows. Those persons who are ordering to slaughter and who are slaughtering are getting the *karma* for that. This milk from organic farms can be used for Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: Many people in the West have the opinion that cow milk causes diseases for humans, because they cannot digest it properly. They are also arguing that the milk is meant only for the calves and not for humans.

ANSWER: In this regard, we have to remember that cow milk which you get in the West and fresh milk coming from an Indian cow are two different products. In Āyurveda and in the Purāṇas, when they glorify cow milk, they have the Indian cow milk in mind, not the processed milk available in supermarkets nowadays. So their research may be right, and I cannot comment on that. I speak of Indian cow milk. There is no proof that it makes people sick.

In India people have been drinking it for centuries. My simple logic is, if they can digest meat, then what to speak of digesting milk. Millions of people are drinking milk and are healthy. Therefore you cannot say that they are not digesting it. Milk is the main tonic for a calf, but a calf cannot drink all the milk a healthy cow gives. If you give that much milk to the calf, it will die. If you give all the milk to the calves, they will get diarrhea. Previously many calves in our *gośālā* died like this because they got too much milk. A cow gives more milk than what is needed for a calf.

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QUESTION: Why are the cows so dear to Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: Cows are charitable, as they are engaged in welfare for others. They give more milk than the calf needs, and the oxen are working in the fields or carrying heavy loads. It is natural that one likes those who have similar qualities as oneself. Kṛṣṇa also possesses the quality of doing welfare for others, and therefore He likes cows, because they are also doing welfare for others. The cow is also very affectionate to its calf. Just like Kṛṣṇa, who is known as *bhakta-vatsala*. *Vatsa* means calf, and *vatsala* means affectionate. Kṛṣṇa loves His devotees as a cow loves her calf.

All the parts of the cow are pure, including her urine and dung. Cow urine has many medicinal values, and cow dung is a very good fertilizer.

Kṛṣṇa is proud to be known as *gopa* (cowherd boy) who cares for cows. By doing *go-sevā* (service to the cows), we can learn these qualities of charity and love from the cows. Parents, cows, and *brāhmaṇas* are doing welfare for others. Respecting them helps us to understand God and make spiritual progress.

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**QUESTION:** When we speak about cow protection in the West, people can appreciate it. But when it comes to the practical aspects, then especially the farmers say that they cannot afford to feed all their cows for their whole life. How can we convince them?

**ANSWER:** First, you have to understand their psychology. They really do not accept this fact of cow protection. If they had really accepted it, then they wouldn't talk like this. Nobody thinks of killing his mother. It is not necessary to kill cows, because their age is limited. They do not live very long. A cow lives for around 15-16 years and then she dies, naturally. Still, if we consider that she is an animal that is raised for a purpose, and if she is not giving milk anymore, we should try to maintain her.

Human beings are growing in number, but no one thinks that the population has grown too much and that old people should be slaughtered. There is also a law now that prevents one from cutting trees, because they realize that the trees are beneficial for us. So if you realize that cows are also beneficial, just as trees are beneficial, then you would maintain them and not send them to the slaughterhouse.

In India they have now made a rule that people can kill cows that are invalid and blind. So people now make them blind and afterwards take their life. People always find ways and means to avoid the law. Whatever rule you make, it does not help unless we realize the importance of the cow.

**QUESTION:** It seems that the economic system in the West is such that the farmers keep as many cows as possible to produce as much milk as possible. Then, when the cows are not productive anymore but still occupy space and need to be fed, these people believe that this is a good reason to kill them.

ANSWER: They do not accept cows as living beings, like human beings, but milk-producing machines. There is a psychology behind talk like this. This psychology is only *sakāma* (fruitive, money-oriented).

QUESTION: So one should explain the psychology of protecting cows?

ANSWER: The basic thing is that if cows have done some good to us, then you can also do some good for them. When human beings become old and unproductive, no gentle person will kill them just because they occupy space and incur some expenditure. For instance, governments are spending so much to maintain old people, social security, pension, old age homes, and so forth, and the same can be done to protect cows.

QUESTION: Eventually it will also come to that stage?

ANSWER: If this is the psychology, then it will come.

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QUESTION: How do *go-sevā* and *nāma-sevā* go together?

ANSWER: On this path of *uttama-bhakti*, one gives up one's independent mentality and is fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa or guru, who is His manifestation, because one's motive, goal, or action is to please guru or Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, one does what is pleasing to him. This means if you want to please Kṛṣṇa, then you do something that is pleasing to Him.

Kṛṣṇa Himself is known as Gopāla, which means one who tends cows. He lives with the cows in Vṛndāvana, which is the place of cows, *go-loka*. Kṛṣṇa belongs to the cowherd caste and is always personally serving the cows. He is neither a *brāhmaṇa* nor a *kṣatriya*. He considers cows as His worshipable deity. Just as we consider Kṛṣṇa as worshipable, cows are the objects of His worship and most dear to Him. Therefore, if we serve cows, then it is naturally pleasing to Him, because if you serve somebody who is dear to another person, then that person is naturally pleased by the service.

In *uttama-bhakti*, a devotee does not have any other desire except to do what is favorable to Bhagavān. Therefore cow service is very important since it is very pleasing to Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa does cow *sevā*. One has to also work under the guru, and if the guru is also doing *go-sevā*, then, if you do cow *sevā*, it is very pleasing to him and



Kṛṣṇa. This is the path of *uttama-bhakti*. Otherwise, if one wants to remain independent, there are so many processes one can follow in the name of religion.

Even from the religious point of view—that means mundane religion—the importance of cows is explained in the *śāstra*. If you want to do any *prāyaścitta*, or atonement, then there is mention of service to cows, donating a cow, or being with the cows. And if you read about *puraścaraṇa*, which is a process of attaining the perfection in the *mantra*, it prescribes that we should serve in the *gośālā* and do service to the cows. So cow service is a very important feature, both of *uttama-bhakti* and other religions. Therefore, *go-sevā* and *nāma-sevā* are both features of *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Kṛṣṇa has created all the animals, so why specifically *go-sevā*?

ANSWER: Cows are mothers for the entire universe, and therefore they are to be respected like mothers. They are the maintainers of humanity by giving milk, cow urine, and cow dung. These are useful and necessary for the maintenance and well-being of the society. Even from the material point of view, they have a special position.

From the spiritual point of view, Kṛṣṇa Himself treats the cow as a mother. He drinks their milk and tends to them. He personally takes care of them. So the cow has importance just as a mother, who has a special significance for human beings. There are so many relations, but a mother has a special place because of her function. She takes care of the child, and all the *samskāras* the children get, come from the mother.

God may have created all species, but He has not created everybody the same. Some of the objects that He has created have a special quality. Therefore, they have a special role to play. In the beginning of creation, God Himself became a cow and propagated creation. Therefore, the cow has a special significance.

■

QUESTION: Here I can see how important *go-sevā* is. But how can *go-sevā* be performed where there are no cows or they are left in a bad condition?

ANSWER: If you cannot do service directly, then do it in the mind or have a serving-mood towards the cows, and do not be envious of them.

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QUESTION: What is the destination of the cows in this *gośālā* when they leave their bodies?

ANSWER: They will go to Goloka Vṛndāvana and become cows there.

QUESTION: What is their *rasa* there?

ANSWER: They have a relationship of *dāsyā* mixed with *vātsalya* to Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: You said once that cows giving up their body in the *gośālā* go to Kṛṣṇaloka. Are they taking birth there or are they just there after they have left their body?

ANSWER: There is no birth in Goloka. Birth is only here. They just go there and become situated in their *svarūpa*.

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QUESTION: In *kṛṣṇa-līlā* there are different kinds of cows, with *mṛdaṅga*-head, etc. How should we understand this?

ANSWER: There is only one type of cow, only the colors are different. It is not that Kṛṣṇa has different breeds of cows, like in the West, where there are various breeds of cows—like the Jersey cow, etc. The cows in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* are not like that, but their colors are different. Some are white, some black, some yellow, and some red.

QUESTION: And the form of the head is the same?

ANSWER: There may be some differences, but they are of the same breed. Just as you see these cows in our cowshed, every cow looks a little different.

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**QUESTION:** Are all cows considered equally holy? The cows here in India are different in their behavior and appearance from cows in the West. Are these also considered holy?

**ANSWER:** A cow is that which has folds, or a “blanket,” under the neck, which is called dewlap (*sāsnā*). That is the characteristic by which you can recognize a cow. Every species of animal has a distinguishing feature by which it is known. The distinguishing feature of the cow is the dewlap hanging under her neck. If you say a cow is that which has four legs, then your definition is not perfect, because there are other animals, like the camel, which also have four legs. Or, if you say the cow has horns, then the buffalo or the deer also have horns. The correct definition of the cow is that which has the dewlap under its neck.

If there is some other animal that looks similar, then that is not exactly a cow, but a *gavaya*, or cow-like. As far as respect is concerned, of course, every species should be respected, but these *gavaya* (cow-like animals) are not the same as cows.

**QUESTION:** All these species, Swiss cows, Jersey cows, and the like, are then *gavaya* but not *go*?

**ANSWER:** They are not really pure cows.<sup>1</sup>

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**QUESTION:** The calves are always with the mother and never with the father. They never see him.

**ANSWER:** They do not know who their father is. It is not like a human family. The relationship with the mother is stronger in all species of life, even in human beings. The father's relation is secondary. The mother is the closest to the child. She takes care of the child and nourishes it.

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**QUESTION:** Is it true that the mouth of a cow is considered unclean, as we read in *Mahābhārata*?

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<sup>1</sup> SND: I read in an article that in the early twentieth century, the cows in the West were crossed with pigs so that they produce more meat. More on this topic: <http://schatzie-speaks.hubpages.com/hub/Belgian-Blue-Cattle-Ethics>

ANSWER: No, it is not unclean. This story of *Mahābhārata* is on the level of *varṇāśrama*, but it is not valid for devotees. Logically speaking, if the mouth of the calf was unclean, then you couldn't offer the milk to God, because the milk is the remnant of the calf.

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QUESTION: Previously we heard that cow dung is pure, and whenever something in the kitchen becomes contaminated, it can be purified with cow dung. For example, when we visit our parents, they sometimes clean our pots together with the eating dishes. Can we purify our pots then with cow dung?

ANSWER: Try to avoid that, and if it happens, then just wash your pots with soap. Cow dung is not meant for that kind of purification.

## 27. Death & Dying

QUESTION: When a person dies, people think that if they give him Rādhā Kuṇḍa water or a *tulasī* leaf, then he will attain ... I do not know what. Now Mahārāja said that all these things, like the *dhāma*, *tulasī*, etc., give their effect only to qualified people. So is it useful at all to do this with non-devotees?

ANSWER: This is just a custom, so people talk like that. Whether a devotee or non-devotee dies, if they do not get the benefit of these objects while they are living, then why should they get it once they die?

The main thing is that people knowingly make mistakes. Even if they come to the spiritual path and take *dikṣā*, they do not like the guru. So they commit offenses and do not cooperate with him. In fact, they do not want to go to Kṛṣṇa, and this is the problem. They do not desire it, because if they desired it, then naturally they would work for it. When you have a desire for something, then you work accordingly, but when you do not desire something, you do not work for it.

People who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa are offensive, disrespectful to the guru, and do not cooperate with him, because they have their own self-interest. In such a situation, why should somebody go to Kṛṣṇa after death? If he had any such interest in Kṛṣṇa while alive, he would have acted properly. All the other problems come because they disrespect the guru. Then they criticize *śāstra*, and criticize others, but all the problems start from disrespect to guru.



The guru is the foundation or the key for success in spiritual life. If one is misbehaving and disrespecting the guru, there is no question of spiritual life. That is material life.

One comes to the guru if one gets Kṛṣṇa's mercy, because nobody can get inspiration by oneself. When this inspiration comes, it is because of Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy. Then he/she accepts a guru and takes *dīkṣā*. After that, it is the person's own will that he/she follows or does not follow the guru. There is nobody who can help with this. So once, by good fortune, one has gotten this inspiration, one should act accordingly. This is the meaning that he is a servant of Bhagavān.

This is what happens: People accept *dīkṣā*, but then they have their own plan and remain independent. Then there is no question of devotional service. It is not so cheap as people think. Not that you just live in Vrindavan, and if you die here, then you will attain something spiritual. It is not dependent on such thinking.

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**QUESTION:** Does a devotee experience death differently? It is said that at the time of his death, Dhruva Mahārāja stepped on the head of Yamarāja before he went to Vaikuṇṭha. What does that mean?

**ANSWER:** This incident shows how by following *vaidhī-bhakti*, one becomes an associate of Bhagavān in Vaikuṇṭha. *Rāgānugā-bhakti*, or *vraja-bhakti*, is different. Perfection is possible only by following the guru. When you have developed attachment for the guru, then naturally you act favorably. In *vaidhī-bhakti* you can remain independent but not in *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

For a *rāgānugā* devotee there is no death in that sense, because he has cultivated the *bhāva* or consciousness to always serve Kṛṣṇa. After this life, he just continues with that; he serves Kṛṣṇa.

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**QUESTION:** How can we understand that Bhīṣma waited for the right moment to die, although he was a devotee of the Lord?

**ANSWER:** He was a *vaidhī-bhakta*, not a devotee of *vraja-bhakti*, and he was also following the *varṇāśrama* system. He waited for the right time, because in the *varṇāśrama* system it is considered auspicious to die when the sun is in *uttarāyaṇa*. Because he had the control over death, he utilized this ability.

**QUESTION:** How should we take the pain of separation and the distress when a devotee leaves his body?

**ANSWER:** If a devotee leaves his body, then the other devotees feel sad because they are losing the association of a devotee and they also feel separation. Just as the devotee has love for Bhagavān, he also has love for the devotees of Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa says that the devotees are very dear to Him. When such a dear devotee leaves, then another devotee feels separation. But this does not mean that he becomes morose.

In the material world, people feel sad or depressed when their friend or relative dies. This is because of material attachment. Sometimes this is all artificial. They may pretend to be sad when someone dies. In India sometimes people even hire other people for crying. However, a devotee actually feels sad because he will not get the association anymore.

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**QUESTION:** If a devotee dies in the West, is there a special ceremony one should do?

**ANSWER:** Bring his ashes to Vrindavan and throw them into Yamunā, and then give a feast for the Vaiṣṇavas.

## 28. Deities

**QUESTION:** Could you explain about *pratiṣṭhā*, the installation of deities? Should we do that and how is it done?

**ANSWER:** Installation of the deity is a very long procedure and lasts for many days. There are various types of worship involved. One has to accumulate many articles, perform a sacrifice, feed people, chant *mantras*, etc. This is a very elaborate procedure. And once the *pratiṣṭhā* is done, it can also be lost because of many reasons. For example, if an unqualified person, like a *mlecchā* or a woman in her contaminated state [in her menstrual period], touches the deity, or if one does not worship the deity for two days consecutively or the deity falls down, then the *pratiṣṭhā* is lost. Many things are mentioned in *śāstra* as to how *pratiṣṭhā* can be lost.

The purpose of installing deities is basically to create *śraddhā* in people. When you arrange a large program, invite people, and provide

a feast for them, they support you. Otherwise, there is no need of an installation, because Bhagavān is everywhere, and He is also in the deity. The desire to worship is also given by Bhagavān Himself. So if Bhagavān is giving you the desire to worship, then He also becomes manifest in the form of the deity, so that you can worship. Thus, there is no need for any installation.

If you do not install Them, however, nobody accepts that you are performing proper worship. They will not even come and pay obeisance to your deities, because in their minds the deities are not installed. Due to the deities not being installed, they will not have faith that one is really worshipping Bhagavān. Receiving the support of people is very important in society, and for that reason, you have to do an installation.

Buddha preached the philosophy of non-violence, and now people are violently destroying his deities. [In Afghanistan the Taliban destroyed a 2000 year old statue of Buddha.] Why is that? Because there is no support from the people. When the support was there, a 150 foot deity of Buddha was made, but now that there is no support, people are destroying the deities with rockets and bombs. [Jokingly] God is also at the mercy of human beings.

In Benares there are so many Śiva-lingas, because Benares is the city of Śiva. When the Muslims attacked and were ruling there, they destroyed many, many temples. The Śiva-lingas from the destroyed temples used to lie scattered around, and no one cared for them. They were even used as a ladder, and people were stepping on them.

Installation is basically for people's support and śraddhā, so that they develop faith: "Yes, this deity is installed." Otherwise, there is no need.

QUESTION: Is *pratiṣṭhā* lost because of offenses?

ANSWER: *Pratiṣṭhā* is lost when you do forbidden things, as mentioned earlier.

QUESTION: But what in the case of *śālagrāma-śilā*, which is self-manifest?

ANSWER: If the *śālagrāma-śilā* breaks, you should not worship it. There are so many rules for the worship of *śālagrāma-śilā*. Kṛṣṇa is always present in the *śilā*, as in the deity. However, as I was explaining before, people do not have faith. When you say, "God is naturally present in the *śālagrāma-śilā*, and there is no need of

*pratiṣṭhā*," they believe it, because people have faith in these words. But as in the *śālagrāma-śilā*, Bhagavān is present everywhere, and if His deity is made, He is present in that, too. Every deity is self-manifest like the *śālagrāma-śilā*, but people do not have *śraddhā* in this. So then you have to make a big celebration, so that they get *śraddhā*. When you do something gross and visible, then people put faith in it.

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QUESTION: There is a story that Sanātana Gosvāmī saw Madan-Mohan playing with the children of the *brāhmaṇa* Chaube in Mathurā. How can we understand that a deity can act like that?

ANSWER: This story is possible because the deity can do anything when He is dealing with His devotee. The deity of Rādhā-Govinda, for example, sometimes used to ask the *pūjārī* for a special preparation to eat. Also Sākṣī-Gopāla walked with His devotee, ate every day, and spoke with him.

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QUESTION: Regarding *vastu*, is it necessary that the deities should face North or East?

ANSWER: The temple *vastu* is different from the *vastu* of houses. Regarding the *vastu* of house altars, there are different opinions, but the deity should not face West.

[See also: *Paricaryā* –Worship]

## 29. Depression

QUESTION: How does one help a devotee who becomes very depressed? He says, "I hear all these things, but this is for people who are surrendered, and I can see from my material desires that I am not surrendered. Therefore there is no hope for me."

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is very simple. It is basically the consciousness that one will act favorably and not do unfavorable things. People in the material world are always acting and doing something, so why not just have this consciousness and act? Where is the obstacle in that? Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad Gītā* that even if one is offering a leaf, some water, a flower, or something, He accepts it. So what is the difficulty in that?



*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam  
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati  
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam  
āśnāmi prayatātmah*

“If a pure-hearted person brings and offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I accept it.” (Gītā 9.26)

All these types of dejection, depression, or thoughts come from ignorance. They are a manifestation of absorption in the material body. All these attachments, such as liking or disliking for matter and material objects come from that. But if one wants to perform *bhakti*, he should make a firm resolve and act on it. And then do not consider the thought, “I cannot do it or it is not possible.” But if one does not want to do *bhakti*, then what can you do about it? Nothing!

As Kṛṣṇa says, “Know Me to be the *ācārya*. You should not envy Me or see Me as a material person—you follow Me.” Having the consciousness that the *ācārya* is not a material person and then acting on it—this is *bhakti*. By even not being envious towards the *ācārya* or things related to him—this also is *bhakti*. So where is the difficulty in having this consciousness? *Bhakti* is simple, and there is no complication in it. It is not that some complicated activity has to be performed, like in other paths, where you have to learn a certain posture or something. There is nothing like that in *bhakti*. It is simple, and you remain simple hearted and act.

*Bhakti* is *kriyā-yoga*, which means performing action, which everybody is doing anyway. All you have to do is to change your consciousness.

### 30. Devotees—Vaiṣṇavas

**QUESTION:** I heard that to understand the *Āyurveda śāstra*, you have to have a lifestyle that is similar to the lifestyle of the persons who wrote them. But if we are not even able to understand *Āyurveda śāstra*, then how can we understand the high philosophy of *uttama-bhakti*, because we are not pure enough and have no previous *saṁskāras*?

**ANSWER:** If you sincerely desire *uttama-bhakti*, and if you like it, then you can understand it. It is not a matter of the brain. There are so many people who have a large intellectual capacity but they cannot understand it, only because they have no interest in it.

**QUESTION:** In your last conversation, you said that all converts are fanatics. When someone becomes a Vaiṣṇava, is he also considered a convert or is he transcendental?

**ANSWER:** Vaiṣṇavas do not fall into this category. Vaiṣṇava means someone who worships Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu means "all-pervading." The Vaiṣṇava vision is also all-pervading. Viṣṇu also means, "one who is the protector" and "one who maintains everybody." Vaiṣṇavas also have a similar mood.

God does not propagate these other religions. The word religion (*dharma*) means discipline, and in its primary form, it is propagated by God Himself. Those religions that are propagated by some individuals bring fanaticism, which creates partial feelings or biases. But Viṣṇu is the Supreme Person, and He is all pervading, He is for everyone, and therefore the Vaiṣṇavas' concept is universal and not just for one limited part or limited society. Fanaticism comes because of individuals. They say something and try to create distinctions or create partiality. This is not godly. The word *dharma* (religion) is used for these paths, but that is in the secondary sense. In the primary sense, *dharma* cannot create fractions in society because it is meant to bring harmony. God Himself propagates it, and it is meant to bring prosperity and maintenance for society. So, in real *dharma* there is no fanaticism.

There are two types of creation: *daivī* and *āsurī*. *Daivī* means followers of Kṛṣṇa, and *āsurī* means those who are against Him.

Vaiṣṇavas are divine, and therefore they are not fanatics like the other converts. Vaiṣṇavas have firm faith in *śāstra* and follow it. They are not envious people.

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**QUESTION:** How do you want your disciples to behave toward each other, and how exactly are we supposed to relate to each other and treat each other?

**ANSWER:** With Vaiṣṇavas one should behave in a friendly manner, like a dear friend in a loving manner, without any desire to cheat or trick them. This is how one should behave.

**QUESTION:** Are we to act like family members or ... Can you explain the verse *dadāti pratigrhṇāti*?

ANSWER:

*dadāti pratigrhṇāti  
guhyam ākhyāti prcchati  
bhuñkte bhojayate caiva  
ṣaḍ-vidham prīti-lakṣaṇam*

“Offering gifts in charity, accepting gifts, revealing one’s mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting and offering food are the six symptoms of love.” (*Upadeśāmṛta* 4)

This verse<sup>2</sup> is talking about material affection or material love. In the spiritual world, the activities are the same which are described in this verse, such as giving or accepting gifts, talking confidentially, etc., but the consciousness is different. In the spiritual world, the consciousness is that you belong to Kṛṣṇa or His devotee and that Kṛṣṇa or His devotee is yours, or that you have a loving affectionate relationship. In the material world, these things are done from the material point of view.

The activities are the same, but the consciousness is different. In the material world, the consciousness is centered around the material body, and in the spiritual world it is fixed on Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: The eternal associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Mahāprabhu are with them in their *līlās* eternally, like Rūpa Gosvāmī, who in *caitanya-līlā* is Rūpa Gosvāmī and in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is Rūpa Mañjarī. What will happen to us when one day we will be in the spiritual world and serve the Lord under the guidance of our guru? Do we serve in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, *caitanya-līlā*, or both? And do we have two identities then?

ANSWER: No one can enter into *kṛṣṇa-līlā* directly. It is only through Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who came and showed how one can enter into *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. One must go through this process of *uttama-bhakti*. Once you become an associate of Śrī Caitanya, then you are also doing *bhakti* of Kṛṣṇa. From there, you have entrance into Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes as Mahāprabhu Himself entered. You have read these descriptions in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*.

<sup>2</sup> This verse is from *Pañcatantra*, an old book of fables by Viṣṇu Śarma which is the basis of Aesop’s Fables. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has taken it from there.

Caitanya's devotees are all His associates, and they also participate in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. So they have two identities. This is the only way one can enter into Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. There is no other way. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa. He becomes a devotee of Himself, and then He relishes devotion as Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Basically, every one of His associates is relishing devotion. And the way to relish it is as Mahāprabhu demonstrated.

*Uttama-bhakti* is available only if one becomes a follower of Mahāprabhu. There is no direct process or entrance into *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Following Caitanya means following through the guru. In *uttama-bhakti*, you enter into the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya, and when you are there, you become absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. That is the only way to enter.

QUESTION: That means that one also has a dual identity on that level?

ANSWER: Because when you are a follower, you follow everything.

## 31. Devotees' Behavior in this World

QUESTION: It is stated in the fourth verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* that one should not desire all these things like wealth, followers, etc., but on the other side to do devotional service we need money, wealth, education, etc. How to understand this?

ANSWER:

*na dhanam na janam na sundarīm  
kavitām vā jagad-īśa kāmāye  
mama janmanī janmanīśvare  
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayī*

"O Master of the Universe, I do not desire wealth, followers, a beautiful wife, or poetic abilities. All I want is unmotivated devotional service to You in every life." (CC Antya 20.29)

Firstly, people have material desires for sense enjoyment, and the scriptures tell them how they can fulfill their desires. So they start doing *sakāma-karma* to fulfill their desires. When they get dissatisfied with it, the scriptures tell them that they should do *niṣkāma-karma*, actions without desiring anything. Yet, the person remains frustrated because he still has material desires. Only because he was frustrated materially, he did not desire anything anymore, but the desires are still latent in his heart.



Now he comes to *bhakti*. On the path of *vaidhī-bhakti*, a person does not have a liking to serve, but he serves because the scriptures recommend it. In *rāgānugā-bhakti*, or *uttama-bhakti*, however, one's only desire is to serve Bhagavān and to please Him.

If a devotee wants to serve Bhagavān, he also needs things for His service. So this verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* shows that Mahāprabhu did not want wealth, etc., independently of Kṛṣṇa.

The famous poet Kālidāsa got some poetic *śakti* by the grace of Kālī, but he was not a pure devotee. He used this power for his own pleasure. A devotee does not want such powers. He only desires to serve and this is all his effort. Dhruva Mahārāja, however, did not even know how to speak poetic prayers, but Viṣṇu gave him this knowledge by touching him with His conch on the cheek. A devotee does not desire things independent of his service.

All material possessions are temporary. A child is born with closed fists, but as an old man, he dies with open hands. In the same way, we do not possess anything independent of Kṛṣṇa.

**QUESTION:** Should one wait until Kṛṣṇa sends money for service or should one make an endeavor for that?

**ANSWER:** One should make an endeavor. Without endeavor nothing is possible. Just as a chariot is moving on two wheels, so we must move on the two wheels of endeavor and mercy. One wheel is the endeavor of the devotee and the other wheel the mercy of Bhagavān. It was indicated by Kṛṣṇa in the *Dāmodara-līlā*. Mother Yaśodā was able to bind Kṛṣṇa only after she made the endeavor and Kṛṣṇa agreed to be bound.

Kṛṣṇa wants to see how seriously one is endeavoring. When He is satisfied, He gives what is needed. But then one should not become egoistic and think that everything has come by one's own hard work.

A man thought he was living only because of his good fortune. So, people made an experiment with him, and put him in a room without any food. There was only a stick and a pot with *rasagulas*. To eat them, he would have to break the pot with the stick, which he did after some time. Still, he was saying, "I survived because of my good fortune." But without his endeavor to break the pot, he would have starved to death. So he needed both, fortune and endeavor. In the same way, a devotee needs both the endeavor and the grace of Bhagavān.

The most important thing is that when one gets money, one should not think, "This happened because of me, and I do not need God anymore," but rather one should know that it came by Kṛṣṇa's grace and it should be used for His service.

**QUESTION:** Where does over-endeavor for material assets begin?

**ANSWER:** Over-endeavor means doing more than one's own capacity. We should not do more or less than what we are capable of doing. Over-endeavor is for example when you see somebody who possesses more than you (i.e., who is doing more service), and then you desire to attain that. So you start to compete with that person.

*Bhakti* means to follow the guru and take guidance from him as to whether or not you are doing things properly or over-endeavoring.

**QUESTION:** It seems to be difficult to judge what over-endeavoring means for oneself.

**ANSWER:** Therefore, you should ask the guru. He knows your capacity.

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**QUESTION:** In the *Bhāgavatam*, Canto Eleven, Kṛṣṇa says that a devotee sees bad things that happen to him as his bad *karma*. But doesn't a devotee see both good and bad things as Kṛṣṇa's arrangement? Or are these statements for different types of devotees?

**ANSWER:** Devotees are not some tape recorders manufactured in the factory, just working mechanically.

In actuality, a devotee does not consider good or bad things as *karma*. He does his duty, and when he is fixed in his service, then whatever situation comes, he deals with it, whether good or bad. He does not sit down and philosophize that this has come to me because of my bad *karma*, or because of Kṛṣṇa's mercy, or this and that. There is no time for all that. Just like in the material world, where people are absorbed. Especially in the West, people do not believe in *karma*. When so many different situations come to them, they just deal with them. They do not go to some Jyotishi (astrologer) to find out about their bad *karma* and why and how this and that happened.

In the same way, the devotee is fixed in his service, and whatever comes, he deals with it. He does not think, "It is my bad *karma*, or it is Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, or it is this or that." Sometimes devotees talk like this, as people in general talk. When a common man in India

has a problem, he says, "It is because of my sin that I am suffering." When the mind is disturbed, you have to give it some reasoning. When there is some problem, you need some consolation, so you have to find some cause-effect relation, and then the mind becomes stabilized. When an unfavorable situation comes, the mind is naturally disturbed. So you have to feed something to the mind for it to hold onto, such as: "Ok, this is my *karma*." Then the mind becomes satisfied, thinking, "I did something wrong in the past, and I am getting the reaction." This gives consolation, and the person can continue in his duty.

A devotee also sometimes talks this way, because this is how a common man talks. Otherwise, there is no need to think like this. Whatever is happening, he does his job.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, for instance, faced many problems, one after another. He would always lament, "O, I must have done some bad *karma* in my past life, therefore I am suffering." This is just to teach people that regardless of their problems or what they are facing, they have to remain fixed in their devotion. Right from his childhood, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja underwent much suffering in his life: His father died in the forest, and they all faced continuous opposition from Duryodhana, and so forth. But through all of this, they remained committed to performing devotional service.

So when somebody talks to a devotee today, the devotee too may now talk like a common person. Śrī Rāmacandra also suffered a lot, and He is God. Instead of sitting on the throne, He was sent to the forest, and there also, He couldn't live peacefully as His wife was kidnapped. After a long and ferocious battle, He finally got her back, but He had to abandon her because of the rumors spread by people. So in the end, He couldn't even live with His own wife.

Now, you can call this *karma*, *līlā*, or this or that, but that is just philosophizing. The point is that a devotee has to take care of the situation. Devotees do not bother about all this. For example, Mahārāja says that his guru (our *param-gurudeva*) had paralysis in his last stage of life. In the *smṛti-śāstra* there are statements that describe what kind of disease comes because of which sin. All the diseases are described as a result of sins, and there are processes for counteracting them by the performance of a certain worship or ritual. In this way, the diseases will go away. Whenever Mahārāja brought up the topic as to whether the sickness happened due to *param-gurudeva's prārabdha-karma*, *param-gurudeva* just kept quiet. Then once Mahārāja wanted to do some *anuṣṭhāna* (religious activity to get rid of the *karma*), but *param-gurudeva* said, "There



is no need for that." That means that he was not thinking it was a result of *prārabdha-karma*.

QUESTION: I was thinking that devotees say, "This is because of Kṛṣṇa's arrangement."

ANSWER: Where is the time for that? Suppose you are cutting green grass and your hand goes inside the machine. Then you are not going to think, "O, this happened to me because of Kṛṣṇa's arrangement." You are going to think that, "Now I have to put some medicine and go to the doctor." What else are you going to think? When you go to your room at night, then you have time for philosophizing. When you are absorbed in *sevā*, you are not thinking, "By picking up cow dung, I am getting rid of my *anarthas*." You are absorbed in your service.

QUESTION: Today I was transcribing a lecture about immediate cause and absolute cause. You meditate on that, and ...

ANSWER: In your free time, you can meditate. This is only for talking and explaining to others. Actually, if you are doing your job, where is the time to think of absolute cause or immediate cause? This is because people keep on asking something, so you have to give them some answer. Otherwise, they are not satisfied and will think, "This guy does not know."

It's just like in the material world. When a person is completely absorbed in materialistic life, he is not bothering about *karma*, fate, grace, chance, immediate cause, or this or that. He thinks of his goal, and day and night he is absorbed in that. He thinks, "How can I achieve my goal?" Whatever it may be, e.g., making a million dollars, he is absorbed in achieving it. He is not thinking of *karma*, etc. A devotee is much more absorbed than that, and he is not bothered about *karma*. When you sit down, then you may speak like that. When you are in your room, you can philosophize, but when you are doing your service, where is the time for all these thoughts?

QUESTION: Yes, ideally you are doing service 24 hours a day, then you do not have any time left for philosophizing?

ANSWER: Yes. When a devotee is fixed, when he has *niṣṭhā* in *bhakti*, he is not bothered about all these things—that is the essence. These explanations are all for the beginning stage, because this is how you have to make your mind fixed. That is why I said, "When the mind is disturbed, you need some support for it; you have to give something to your mind." You were asking about "a devotee,"



so “a devotee” means someone who is fixed in his service. He does not have such problems with his mind. There is no need for him to think of *karma*, or this or that.

QUESTION: This is another example of *śāstra* speaking to people to give them some food?

ANSWER: Yes, obviously, because *śāstra* is clearly for such people. Those who are fixed do not need *śāstra*. They do service.

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QUESTION: It is said that we should respect every living entity, even in the mind, but sometimes one sees other Vaiṣṇavas behaving in an improper way. How should one deal with such a situation?

ANSWER: Respect is given because every living entity is the sitting place of Bhagavān. He exists everywhere. Respect is not given to an individual. So if somebody is performing a wrong act, then we do not support that. If a person is misbehaving, we do not associate with such a person.

If somebody, for example, blasphemes the guru, we do not have to give him respect. We just avoid his association, because he is not a person with whom we want to associate. We give respect because Bhagavān is everywhere. So respect is given because of Bhagavān's presence and not because of some individual person, unless that person is also respectable.

So, if some good character is manifest in somebody, then you respect him, and if not, you just avoid him. The idea is to give respect so that you do not become envious of or attached to some individual person. As it is said in this famous verse in the *Gītā*—seeing a dog, a dog-eater, and a *brāhmaṇa* as equal:

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne  
brāhmaṇe gavi hastini  
śuni caiva śva-pāke ca  
paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

“The wise look with equal vision on a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.” (Gītā 5.18)

It doesn't mean that you give equal respect to everybody. Give respect so that you do not become involved in *rāga* and *dveṣa*,

attachment or hatred for anybody. That does not mean that you have to treat a dog and a *brāhmaṇa* as equal. On the practical level, you have to deal with individuals according to the proper etiquette. But from the spiritual point of view, Bhagavān exists everywhere. To have this consciousness means to have equal vision.

So a dog and a *brāhmaṇa* should not be treated in the same manner. They are treated according to their nature and qualification.

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**QUESTION:** In daily life so many impressions come to us, and many of them we actually do not want. What should be our attitude and what can we do so that these impressions are not disturbing us and we can concentrate on *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself has said in *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu  
mām anusmara yudhya ca  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir  
mām evaiṣyasy asaṁśayaḥ*

“Therefore, always remember Me and fight. With your mind and intellect fixed on Me, you will undoubtedly attain Me alone.” (*Gītā* 8.7)

*Mām anusmara yudhya ca*—you should think of Me and fight. Fighting implies that you have to face so many unfavorable situations in this world. You have problems even from your own body. You fall sick or feel the impressions of lust, greed, anger, envy, etc., and the body itself is perishable. Unfavorable situations are always coming in the world, beginning from one’s own body, then the family. If you have to work outside, there are problems that come from other people. In all situations you have to always remember Kṛṣṇa and guru, and remain fixed. This world is like a battlefield, and you have to fight like a warrior. That is possible only if you remember Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa Himself has given the formula: *mām anusmara yudhya ca*, “You should think of Me and fight.” And He also says other things:

*mātrā-sparsās tu kaunteya  
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ  
āgamāpāyino ’nityās  
tāms titikṣasva bhārata*

“O son of Kuntī, the contact of the senses with their objects gives rise to the feelings of heat and cold, happiness and misery. They are

transitory, having a beginning and an end. Therefore, O descendant of Bharata, tolerate them.” (Gītā 2.14)

All these problems come and go, so you have to tolerate them.

He further says:

*samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca  
tathā mānāpamānayoḥ  
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu  
samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitāḥ*

*tulya-nindā-stutir maunī  
santuṣṭo yena kenacit  
aniketāḥ sthira-matir  
bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ*

“One who treats alike enemy and friend; who is equal-minded in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and misery, and praise and reproach; who is free from attachment and is contemplative, satisfied with any means, without any feeling of ownership in any material dwelling; and who has a steady mind endowed with devotion, such a person is dear to Me.” (Gītā 12.18-19)

You have to remain equanimous in praise and criticism, happiness and distress. By following these instructions, you can remain fixed.

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**QUESTION:** How do we deal with all these impressions we get during the normal day? When we work outside the home, we are subjected to so many impressions.

**ANSWER:** When you live in this world, it is not possible that you meet only those people who have the same philosophical understanding as you, or who follow the same path. Even if you live here in Vrindavan, not everybody is following your path. Still, you have to deal with people. It is not possible not to deal with them.

When dealing with people, you have to be fixed in your own conceptions and not become influenced by others. You become influenced when you start liking other's concepts. First you appreciate the person or the concept, and then you follow it. So you have to remain fixed in your own understanding.

We cannot avoid dealing with others. Even I have to deal with people, and the people whom I deal or live with do not have the

same concepts that I have. But I do my job and they do their job. Just as they do not take my concepts, I do not take their concepts. In these dealings, people are not influenced by you, and you also should not become influenced by them.

QUESTION: But sometimes we feel affected, even if we do not like it.

ANSWER: How can you feel affected without your liking?

QUESTION: There is so much violence around us, people are aggressive etc., and this influences us.

ANSWER: That you cannot avoid, but that does not mean that you follow their philosophy. If you meet violent people, then obviously you cannot remain peaceful. But this does not make you lose or weaken your faith in devotion.

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QUESTION: In the material world, people let you down again and again. How can we trust people in the material world?

ANSWER: In the material world, there is some truth and some cheating going on, because here nobody is independent or supremely powerful. Everybody needs help from others. To fulfill their own needs, people will take shelter of the cheating propensity. Just as if you want to sell something, you cannot say to the other person, "This is the exact cost, and I am making this much profit." Then no one will buy it. You have to say that your cost is twice of what it actually is, and then you will have to tell some lies, such as: "I am not making any profit from you, because you are a devotee. I like devotees." So many lies you have to tell. This is how business is run.

Only in *bhakti* or in true spiritual life, it is taught that one should give up cheating. Therefore, when we are dealing with materialistic people, we have to do business in the way business is done. We also have to be very careful, so that we are not cheated.

People get cheated because they want to get cheated and allow themselves to be cheated. When there is light, then fireflies rush toward it. The light is not telling them anything. It works both ways, which basically means that we also want something. And we also have the tendency that, "I am going to gain something from this, so let me trick this guy." In this process, it depends who can outsmart the other person. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says that one should become knowledgeable and expert. In the material world, one has



to deal with such people, but in the spiritual world one has to give up this cheating completely.

In Vrindavan in the winter, many people who dress shabbily will come to you, especially to the *āśramas* and to the well-known people, saying, "I have no clothes. Please give me a blanket." If you know that this guy is a cheater, then you also have to tell lies and say, "I cannot afford to give you a blanket, and I have no blankets," although you may have them. If you don't say this and give him, many others will come, because this is their business. They go to different places to beg. Even if they get 20 blankets, still they remain dressed in tattered clothes. In the same way, people on the street, who are begging, do not dress properly, because if they dress properly nobody would give them any money. It is not that they do not have anything. Afterwards, they will just sell the blankets in the market. They are tricking you. If you know that, then you also have to tell lies, so that you do not get tricked.

QUESTION: Why is it so important to give up association with materialistic people?

ANSWER: You become like whom you associate with. A man is known by the company he keeps. Whomever you associate with, will influence you. So if you do not want to be influenced, then you must avoid their association. If you like Kṛṣṇa or if you want to love Kṛṣṇa, then you should not associate with people who do not like Kṛṣṇa or have no interest in devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

QUESTION: Did Mahārāja not say that one loses his faith in his guru, then?

ANSWER: One loses faith in spiritual life, in guru, in *śāstra*, in Kṛṣṇa, and in everything if one associates with non-devotees, because they have no faith.

QUESTION: Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is a path of truthfulness, sincerity, and straightforwardness, but what if, for example, in business, you have to tell a lie. Does that affect your consciousness?

ANSWER: Generally, on the other paths such as *karma*, *yoga*, *jñāna*, etc., there are rules that one should be non-violent, truthful, not stealing anything, not accumulating things, follow *brahmacharya*, etc. If you analyze all of these rules, it is just impossible to follow any one of them completely.

For example, being non-violent (*ahimsā*) is the first principle in yoga. In this world, nobody can live without violence; it is impossible. Whatever path you follow, if you want to exist, there is some violence involved. Even if you are not physically killing, you are still doing violence. There are only two types of consciousness in this world—one is of liking and the other is dislike or hatred. So if you like somebody, then naturally there is dislike for someone else. This duality is always there in the material world. Disliking or hatred is also a type of violence. Hatred is the basis of violence. It is impossible that you do not dislike someone. Materialistic people have hatred or enmity for someone, and this is also violence. One may not become physically violent because of social or legal restrictions, but the feeling of violence is there. It may come out as verbal abuse or some other kind of damage toward the person who is the object of one's hatred.

Like that, you can also analyze the other rules, say truthfulness. It is very difficult to even define what truthfulness is. It is described that sometimes, when you say things which are right, it is not considered as truthfulness, and sometimes telling a lie is as good as speaking the truth. Similarly, stealing means taking things without the permission of the owner. It is difficult to even decide who the actual owner is. Without knowing that, how can you say whether one is stealing or not stealing? If you analyze like that, none of these rules can be followed perfectly.

However, on the path of *bhakti*, all these definitions do not apply. Other paths are not related to consciousness in the true sense. They are actually related to matter. *Bhakti*, however, is related to consciousness—the supreme consciousness, the Supreme Person, who is God. In *bhakti*, the basic principle is that first one surrenders to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and then one always acts favorably and never acts unfavorably. This is called truthfulness on the path of *bhakti*. Of course you have to learn from the guru what is favorable and what is not favorable. To be favorable is the principle, and that includes being truthful, non-violent, and so on. But if you are doing something which is not favorable, even if it is righteous or truthful in the common sense, it is not truthful (in *bhakti* or in the absolute sense). Here the truthfulness is with one person, the guru. If you are truthful to him, then whatever you are doing is truthful, and when you are not truthful towards him, then whatever you are doing is untruthful.

This consideration of doing business and telling lies, and whether it has any influence on you, does not exist on the path of *bhakti*. Such things cannot have any influence if you are a truthful devotee,

because whatever you do, you do it with the consciousness that this is favorable to your guru, Kṛṣṇa, or your service. Thus nothing else can have any influence on a true devotee. That is why it is said that when you take to *bhakti* or surrender to Kṛṣṇa, then you become free from all *karma*, both *prārabdha* and *aprārabdha*. That means that these things do not affect you anymore, because you are working under the highest principle, pleasing the guru, who is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

For example, when somebody is taking *bābājī-veṣa*, which is a symbol of complete surrender, then, even if the person is not really surrendering, but has just accepted the *veṣa*, the dress, immediately people respect him. Everybody, even those who are atheistic, give some respect to such a person. Just because a person has changed his dress, his *prārabdha-karma* has changed. If the person is actually born in a low class family, especially in India, then high class people do not respect him. But when he has put on the dress of a *bābājī*, even they will respect him and will call him *sādhu*, *mahātmā*, and join their palms in front of him out of respect. That means he does not have the same *prārabdha* as before. Just because he has put on a dress which in the past was put on by great people like the Gosvāmīs, who truly followed this path, he is given respect. This is the influence of just putting on the dress of complete surrender. Then you can imagine, when the person is actually surrendered, how none of these things (violence, lies, etc.) can have any influence on him.

Therefore, these two paths should be understood properly, and in the proper light. One is related to matter and the other is related to spirit. The first is based on all these principles of truthfulness, non-violence, etc., which cannot really be defined. If you want to follow, they must be defined. But you can't even define them properly. People are talking about non-violence, but you ask them what it is, they have no clear answer. Cheating somebody is also violence. That probably no one will tell you.

On the path of *bhakti*, however, the whole principle is that from the very beginning, you take the *saṅkalpa* (resolve) to do *ānukūlya* to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and then whatever you do is truthfulness. That is why it is called the path of truthfulness.

Business is always based on telling some lies, otherwise you cannot do business. Therefore, in Sanskrit there is actually a word for business, which is *satyāṅṛta*. *Satyāṅṛta* means truth (*satya*) and lie (*anṛta*). Some lying is allowed in business, but it should not be excessive. For example, when you sell something that has been



adulterated, that is excessiveness. For that, even the government will punish you if you get caught, what to speak of the punishment coming from God. But you have to make some profit, and therefore you say, "I am not making any profit." With these types of statements you survive. But you should not cheat the customer, which means that you tell him that you are giving him one thing, but you give him another thing, or you adulterate it. That is improper, that is sinful. That is not allowed.

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**QUESTION:** I have difficulties in dealings with other Vaiṣṇavas and people from other groups. If I see someone doing certain things, which I think are not proper, but the person wants to talk to me all the time, then what can I do to set limits without offending the other person?

**ANSWER:** What is the difficulty if he talks to you? If he does not like what you are doing, then obviously you disassociate with that person. We do not just socialize with everybody and anybody and forget about our own goal. I don't know what kind of talk it is and what his motive is behind it.

**QUESTION:** Is it not offensive if I see certain things and think that this is not proper behavior?

**ANSWER:** What is offense? If somebody is doing wrong, then he is doing wrong. What is the offense in seeing it? We are not blind. An offense is, if you go and start instructing him about his mistake when he is not interested. So many people are doing so many things, and they are not bothered about you and your philosophy. So, why should you bother?

**QUESTION:** So seeing these things is not offensive?

**ANSWER:** Why should it be offensive?

**QUESTION:** If one sees certain improper things, it is difficult to still give respect and see that the Lord is residing there.

**ANSWER:** But that is what I am saying. What do you mean by giving respect? You do not have to fall on the ground to touch their feet. Do not hate them, this is being respectful. Respect is given in different ways. What is the difficulty? If somebody is doing wrong, he is doing wrong. And if you know it, then what is wrong with that? We do not close our eyes. You do not have to hate them, nor do you become attached to them. Problems come because of hatred and



attachment, *rāga* and *dveṣa*. You just have to see that these are also people in whom *Īśvara* exists, because He exists everywhere. From that point of view, why do you have to hate them? If somebody is doing wrong, let him do. What is your problem?

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**QUESTION:** There are so many examples of disciples accepting initiation from unqualified so-called gurus. When they later take initiation from a bonafide guru, does the former so-called guru get some benefit from that?

**ANSWER:** There is no benefit. How is the disciple going to help his former guru? Help is felt consciously. It is a matter of a change in consciousness. It is not something that will just happen unknowingly because the disciple did something. It is not like that in *bhakti*.

## 32. Dikṣā

**QUESTION:** *Bhakti* has to be given by somebody who has it. When one gets initiated, how does *bhakti* become manifest in the heart of the disciple?

**ANSWER:** When someone takes *dikṣā*, then Kṛṣṇa Himself accepts him as His own person. That is why he is taking *dikṣā*. Even before taking *dikṣā*, the inspiration to take *dikṣā* is given by Kṛṣṇa. That means Kṛṣṇa has accepted you. With *dikṣā*, Kṛṣṇa accepts the person, and that is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* means surrendering, and that is why you surrender. But after that, you must follow the principle of surrender. If the disciple is not following, if he is not doing *ānukūlya* and remains attached to material things, then Kṛṣṇa becomes dissatisfied. Although Kṛṣṇa Himself inspired the disciple and gave him the opportunity to surrender, if the person does not follow, then Kṛṣṇa becomes displeased.

Kṛṣṇa gives the inspiration at the time of *dikṣā*. *Dikṣā* itself means devotion, because you are surrendering to Kṛṣṇa. The devotee (guru), Kṛṣṇa, and *bhakti* are on an equal platform. Whether the guru is giving *dikṣā* or whether Kṛṣṇa is accepting you, it is the same thing.

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**QUESTION:** In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī explains that *dīkṣā* means the guru imparts the *viññāna* onto the disciple, which has two aspects: *bhagavat-svarūpa jñāna* and *bhagavat-viśeṣa-sambandha jñāna*. What exactly is it? What is imparted and how does it develop?

**ANSWER:** After *dīkṣā*, one has to take *śikṣā* as is described in SB 11.3.22:

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān  
śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ  
amāyayānuvṛttyā yais  
tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ*

“From the guru, whom one should love as one’s own self and as the object of one’s devotion, one should learn the principles of *bhakti* by rendering service to him with sincerity. By that service, Śrī Hari, who is the soul of the Universe and gives Himself to His devotees, is pleased.”

*Dīkṣā* is followed by surrender, and that is accompanied by service to the guru. *Guru-ātma-daivataḥ* (the guru is *ātmā-priya*, dear), and also worshipable. One has to perform service without any cheating propensity (*amāyayānuvṛtti*). When one does that, one will receive knowledge.

This is how it was followed previously, and this is what *sāstra* says. In our (Mahārāja’s) times, it was followed like that, although even in those days there were deviations, and people were making a business out of it, but not to the extent they are doing it at present. Now people do not even know what the reality is, and everything has just become a business.

Otherwise, after taking *dīkṣā*, there is complete surrender to the guru, and there is oneness of heart. A person changes his name and sees himself only in relationship with the guru, not independent of that. So, his whole life is rotating around the guru. When that is the case, then he gets this knowledge.

It is not like a fruit of a tree that you get just like that, but it comes with education. The guru is the representative of God, and he is the teacher. So he gives the knowledge.

\*

**QUESTION:** There are certain restrictions regarding chanting the *dīkṣā mantra*. Are there also specific times at which one should chant it? Like the *gāyatrī* is chanted three times a day, so are we to chant the *dīkṣā mantra* three times?

ANSWER: With the *dikṣā mantra*, there is no such rule as with the *gāyatrī*. That is in the *varṇāśrama* system. They have to chant it to get free from sins. But the *dikṣā mantra* should be chanted in the morning after taking bath and before eating anything. If one wants to chant more at other times, one can do that also.

QUESTION: Right now we haven't realized that the *mantra*, guru, and deity are one because we are not qualified yet. What is the qualification in order to realize the *mantra*?

ANSWER: This path of *uttama-bhakti* is not imaginary like other processes. The six *darśanas*, the six systems of philosophy that we have spoken about yesterday, are all imagination, except the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta.

In *uttama-bhakti*, everything is defined—Bhagavān, His abode, the Name, the process, *māyā*, etc. Everything is properly defined, and also how to realize them. *Uttama-bhakti* is a practical process which one can experience. It basically depends on one's own truthfulness and sincerity.

Realization comes by the grace of Bhagavān. *Svayameva spṣhuratyadaḥ* (BRS 1.2.234), the Name, etc., of Bhagavān are transcendental and cannot be contacted with material senses, but when one desires to serve, then they become manifest in a qualified person. So that qualification comes by the pleasure of the guru. If the guru is treated as God or a worshipable person, and one has no other motive, then it is possible to realize whatever is said in *śāstra*.

The reason is that ultimately, one will live with Kṛṣṇa in one's eternal body. So first one has to prove that one is qualified. Not that one is unqualified, and after reaching Kṛṣṇa's abode, one creates trouble for Him. Pure devotional behavior has to be shown here with the guru, and that also happens by the grace of Bhagavān. If one is able to act or behave properly, which means not having any other motive, but having the sincere desire to serve the guru exactly like Bhagavān, and not thinking of him as an ordinary person or a material human being, then one becomes qualified, and all these things are revealed. These are actual facts. There is no imagination in that. That is the basic process. First of all, one has to decide for oneself whether one wants it or not. There is no separatist mentality on this path, nor is there some fixed criteria that states, "If you do it in this manner, chant in this way or this many times, then you will get this much result." *Uttama-bhakti* is not material. It's a matter of becoming completely dedicated with no other motives.

**QUESTION:** Why is the *dīkṣā mantra* kept secret? How can a pure *mantra* become contaminated?

**ANSWER:** This is a restriction put on by the sages, that the *mantra* should be kept secret. In fact, this is the meaning of the word *mantra* itself. Everywhere, whether it is *tantra*, *yamala*, or *śāstra*, it is said that the *mantra* should be kept secret, otherwise it loses its power.

**QUESTION:** What is the benefit of receiving the *dīkṣā mantras*, even when one does not remember them or at least not all of them?

**ANSWER:** Forgetfulness is a disease. During *dīkṣā*, every *mantra* is given three times in the ear, and the disciple is expected to remember it. If you cannot remember them, then at least do not forget Kṛṣṇa's name, the *mahā-mantra*.

Ultimately *dīkṣā* means to follow the order of the guru; that is the essence. Therefore, if one is unable to remember the *mantra*, then remember the *nāma*—the *mahā-mantra*—and chant that. If one has *niṣṭhā*, then perfection is attained correspondingly.

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**QUESTION:** We hear that *varṇāśrama* gurus initiated the Pāṇḍavas, and that they did not take *dīkṣā* because they are the eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa, therefore there was no need for them to do that. But at the time of Kṛṣṇa, how did common people come to the path of *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** The processes of *paramparā* and *dīkṣā* are only for Kaliyuga.

In previous yugas, it was all *varṇāśrama*. So everybody was initiated according to his *varṇa* and *āśrama*. A person would be initiated as a *brāhmaṇa* at the age of seven, and as a *kṣatriya* at eleven. Then they would go to the *gurukula*, live under the shelter of the guru, be obedient and study the Vedas. In householder life, they would perform their regular duties and sacrifices. This was the system. If they were devotees, they would follow *varṇāśrama* with the intention of being a devotee, with devotional consciousness, but predominantly it was *varṇāśrama*. Now there is predominantly no *varṇāśrama*. Therefore *bhakti* is propagated, because anyone can take to it.

**QUESTION:** How did common people acquire the consciousness of worshipping Bhagavān?



ANSWER: Generally *bhakti* was not known, *varṇāśrama* was predominant.

QUESTION: This is the special mercy now?

ANSWER: Mainly Caitanya Mahāprabhu propagated pure *bhakti*. Before that other *ācāryas* like Rāmānuja and Madhvācārya propagated *bhakti*, but it was mixed up with *varṇāśrama*. Only Caitanya Mahāprabhu propagated *uttama-bhakti*.

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QUESTION: You told the story about someone who came from Bengal and just wanted to use your *sampradāya* affiliation so he could collect money. Why did you initiate him? And why are you initiating people who are obviously and blatantly only interested in the *pravṛtti-mārga*? What is their benefit if you initiate them?

ANSWER: They are interested in material gains, and that is what they get, because they come for that. Just today somebody came and wanted to take *bābājī-veśa*. I asked him why he wanted initiation. He said, "I am staying in an *āśrama*, and it is a general custom that Vaiṣṇavas do not eat from the hands of non-Vaiṣṇavas or uninitiated people. They do not even accept water from them. Therefore, I want to take *dīkṣā*, otherwise I cannot even serve them. They are also pressurizing me to take *dīkṣā* from them, but I do not want that." After taking *dīkṣā*, he wants to travel to Jagannātha Purī, as once you take *bābājī-veśa*, you can travel in Indian trains without a ticket. Therefore, I am doing welfare to him, and that is the purpose. Since I am not his guru in the true sense of the word, and he is not a disciple, there is no spiritual benefit.

### 33. Dislike

QUESTION: Yesterday you spoke about the liking and disliking of people. Does disliking come from *anādi avidyā* (beginningless ignorance) or from the will of a person who has decided that this other person is against God?

ANSWER: The dislike is because of ignorance (*anādi avidyā*). Due to ignorance, a person has a selfish nature. This means that they are attached to the body.

**QUESTION:** You said that this *dveṣa* (dislike) never turns into liking for Bhagavān. It seems that this is the ultimate decision of a person, but is there no chance of getting rid of this dislike by *sādh*-*saṅga* or hearing *śāstra*?

**ANSWER:** There is a chance to get rid of the tendency to dislike for Bhagavān, but it should not be misunderstood that the dislike transforms into *bhakti*. Some people think that the dislike itself will turn into a liking. However, as I said before, the dislike will not change into a liking. You have to give up disliking. The whole concept that lust will become love is wrong.

**QUESTION:** If a person has disliking now, will he never develop liking for God and *śāstra*?

**ANSWER:** They will never like them, because they have developed liking for something else and a dislike for the right thing, which is God. Consequently, they will continue to like something other than God and make groups, join similar groups, and remain firm in what they like and dislike. They always go along with society, social beliefs, and conventions. If you try to tell them something from *śāstra*, they will not accept it. That is why Kṛṣṇa said:

*manuṣyānāṁ sahasreṣu  
kaścīd yatati siddhaye  
yatatām api siddhānāṁ  
kaścit mām vetti tattvataḥ*

“Among thousands of human beings, one might strive for perfection; even amongst those who strive and even amongst those who have attained perfection, hardly anyone knows Me in reality.” (Gītā 7.3)

Only if one gets saintly association, will one be able to accept the *śāstras*, otherwise people will continue with their material intents and likings.

## 34. Doubts

**QUESTION:** Where do doubts come from and how do we get rid of them?

**ANSWER:** Doubts stem from ignorance. Doubt basically means that you have two types of nature. For instance, in the dark, an object could look like a man or like a tree. This is called doubt, because you are not sure whether it is one or the other.

If, however, you become sure, then that is knowledge. Knowledge means that you are certain that it is in fact a tree and not a man, or a man and not a tree. Whenever there is ignorance, there are doubts.

*ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca  
saṁśayātmā vinaśyati  
nāyaṁ loko 'sti na paro  
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanah*

“He who is ignorant, devoid of faith, and doubtful, is ruined. Neither this world, nor the other, nor happiness exists for a person who is afflicted with doubt.” (Gītā 4.40)

When a person is ignorant and does not have *śraddhā*, doubt arises. That means one is unable to ascertain what is true. There are different paths and different processes for removing doubts. The path of *bhakti* explains that doubt will be removed by performing service, hearing, and *sat-saṅga*. Then one will understand the reality.

Ignorance is of five types: *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *abhiniveśa*; or as described in the *Bhāgavatam*: *tamas* (ignorance), *moha* (illusion of the bodily concept), *mahā-moha* (being mad after material enjoyment), *tāmisra* (anger), and *andha-tāmisra* (considering death as the ultimate and final).

*sasarja cchāyayādiyām  
pañca-parvānam agrataḥ  
tāmisram andha-tāmisram  
tamo moho mahā-tamaḥ*

“First Brahmā created ignorance of five types from his shadow: *tāmisra*, *andha-tāmisra*, *tamas*, *moha*, and *mahā-moha*.” (SB 3.20.18)

Not knowing things in a proper sense, identification with the body, attachment, hatred, and fear of death are different manifestations of ignorance, and ignorance gives rise to doubt, whether it is in relationship to one's own self or other objects. *Bhakti* is the path to transcend this ignorance.

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**QUESTION:** We live in the material world, so how do we make the right decision between the material world and the spiritual path?

**ANSWER:** There are two paths: the path of *pravṛtti* (material) and the path of *nivṛtti* (spiritual). On the material path, your dealings

are material in nature and your focus is bodily related. You have to deal and act according to the material convention. When you are on the spiritual path, however, and working for a spiritual goal, then you have to pose your doubts to the guru, take proper decision on that basis, and then act.

On the spiritual path, you have to follow *śāstra*. Here the basic principle is that you act favorably and avoid that which is unfavorable. It is a very subtle matter to know what is favorable and unfavorable. So this has to be learned from the guru. If a doubt exists, one should present it to the guru and ask him. It is also difficult to make a proper decision just from *śāstra* alone. Therefore, the qualification of the guru is that he is expert in *śāstra* and also in realization. So, a decision has to be made according to his instruction.

## 35. Dreams

**QUESTION:** Can one maintain one's devotional consciousness as the servant of Bhagavān while in a deep sleep?

**ANSWER:** This consciousness of being a servant of Bhagavān is maintained in all states; there is no break in it. Whether one is awake, dreaming, or in a deep sleep—there is a continuity of existence.

**QUESTION:** When we remember our dreams, can we judge how much we embrace this consciousness?

**ANSWER:** Yes, in dreams we come to know what is natural for us, because we cannot impose anything onto our dream state.

## 36. Dvādaśī

**QUESTION:** On Dvādaśī we should not bathe the deities, because on this day *tulasī* should not be removed from the feet of the Lord. Should we therefore change the clothes of the deities on Dvādaśī?

**ANSWER:** Yes, you should change Their clothes, but do not remove *tulasī* from the feet of the deities.

**QUESTION:** But how can we do this, as our deities are very small? When I change Their clothes, *tulasī* always gets removed.

**ANSWER:** When you have changed the clothes of the deities, then put *tulasī* back at Their lotus feet.



## 37. Ego, Spiritual and Material

**QUESTION:** For such a long time we have assumed that we are the body and this has become natural for us. Can we get rid of this material ego in a practical way, simply by thinking, “I am not this body?”

**ANSWER:** Various philosophies explain how the body is different from the self, and there are different processes prescribed to equip one with the ability to discriminate. Then there is the process of *bhakti*. You have a liking for God and the guru, and by this liking, you become absorbed in devotion. Once this happens, your association with the body naturally falls away. Otherwise, all these philosophical systems and processes are futile.

For example, Arjuna, who was Kṛṣṇa's friend from childhood, talked, ate, walked, and did so many things with Kṛṣṇa. He was sitting on the chariot with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was driving it, but Arjuna's bodily attachment was intact. Therefore, all these philosophies do not work. Even after hearing *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna was still the same. People ask if we have spiritual emotions or experiences, but where were Arjuna's spiritual emotions? He was even sitting next to Kṛṣṇa and his spiritual emotions were, “These are my friends, brothers, uncles, and nephews.”

So you see, these other philosophies do not work. Nobody practicing these philosophies can truly know the difference between body and self. Even if you learn and lecture on philosophy, and conduct many experiments, you cannot figure it out. The only solution is the philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and that is the philosophy of *bhakti*. One should take to *uttama-bhakti*, although it is very difficult to understand.

The first thing is to practice cooperation. If you understand *bhakti* and become a devotee, then realization naturally happens. In the beginning one may find it difficult, but at least cooperate. For instance, when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was here, all His associates came from different places. His associates were not His family members. But they all cooperated with Him. They were completely dedicated to Him. When one cooperates and is dedicated like that, then there is no question of identifying with one's own body or things related to it. It is not that these things like your body will go away, or that a man will become a female or vice versa. They will still say, “I am a man,” but their absorption will be in Bhagavān and in the service to Him.

Another example is when Mahāprabhu ordered Nityānanda Prabhu to go away and not come to Purī. So Nityānanda stayed in Bengal and did what he was asked to do. This is called cooperation. By doing what he was asked to do, he did not think of himself as independent. His identification with his body did not remain. This is the only process that works, and it is easy.

If one does not cooperate like this, one remains wherever one is, as in the case of Arjuna. Arjuna remained Arjuna. In *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna represents the common human consciousness. *Bhagavad Gītā* is not an explanation of *bhakti*. It is an explanation of how a materialistic person behaves. Even if God is present, still they speak of “my this” and “my that.”

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**QUESTION:** The *bhakti-mārga* seems to be the only path on which you give up your own ego. In that sense, is it also the most painful path in the beginning?

**ANSWER:** In *bhakti* there is no question of giving up the ego. In fact, on this path one has a complete ego. It is only on the other paths that you are told to give up the ego. Although they try, they are not successful, because it is not possible. In *bhakti*, however, there is no question of giving up the ego. If you give up the ego, how will you work? One has to understand that it is the identification with the wrong thing and ignorance that has to be given up. This is a straightforward path. You become situated in your real ego, and that is it. On other paths, they do physical or mental gymnastics with the help of their own intelligence. They try to remove their identification, but it never works. The path of *bhakti*, however, is the path where you identify yourself with your real ego and act from that. This is the path of complete ego.

Ego, or “I,” ultimately refers to the self. When we say “I,” that “I” means the self, and the self can never be given up. So in *bhakti*, you are told that this is what you are, and this identification with the body, which you consider as “I” and “mine”—“this is me” and “this belongs to me”—is ignorance. This ego will be given up anyway at the time of death when you have to give up this body. Nobody can maintain the body when it is time to die. That material ego or identification with the body and things related to it will be taken away. But the real ego nobody can give up.

In *bhakti*, you are told what your real identity is, and that the real ego is related to Bhagavān. The other ego is material. There is nothing wrong or complicated with the real ego. So when you understand it, or when you take *dīkṣā*, then you will identify with your real ego. So what's the problem with that? In fact, all problems are solved with this understanding. This is the simplest process; otherwise, as in Nyāya, you have to become liberated, which means to become free from 21 types of miseries. How will you achieve that? Hence, whatever you do, you keep on identifying with your material body, and regardless of the tools you use to try and free yourself from misery, you cannot be freed.

In *bhakti*, right from the first step, you are put on the real platform. Therefore, you are free from *māyā*, and there is no complication. It is the easiest process. There is no question of giving up your own self.

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QUESTION: How is the ego annihilated in *bhakti*?

ANSWER: This means you realize your real ego. Annihilation means that the material identification is given up. If the real ego were annihilated, you would lose your own existence. On other paths, they speak of annihilation of the ego, but in *bhakti* there is no annihilation in that sense. Knowing that you are a servant is your real ego. If there were no ego at all, how would you function? But people do not want to function because they want liberation and not service. So they talk of giving up or annihilating the ego.

## 38. Ekādaśī

QUESTION: Why do we not eat grains on Ekādaśī? I have never heard the explanation for it.

ANSWER: On Ekādaśī, all sins enter into the grains, therefore, on this day we do not eat them. It is also good for physical and psychological health to refrain from eating grains once in every fortnight.

On Ekādaśī, perfected devotees fast completely—*nirjala*. They are so absorbed in loving feelings for Bhagavān that they do not eat, drink, and sleep on that day. The reason for this is to remember Kṛṣṇa. If one is able to remember Kṛṣṇa, one should abstain from

any food or drink. But children, pregnant women, or those who have acidity, as well as sick or old people should not do *nirjala* fast. *Nirjala* fasting is for those who are able to do it.

You can eat a light diet of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and roots, so that you are able to remember Kṛṣṇa. When somebody is engaged in *nirjala* fasting, it is not good for them to sleep all day due to weakness, nor should they be thinking of the time when they can eat and drink again. A complete *nirjala* fast should not hamper your service. Otherwise, you should eat light diet instead of a full fast.

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QUESTION: Shall we cook grains for the deities on Ekādaśī?

ANSWER: You can offer *bhoga* with grains to Rādhā-Govinda. Kṛṣṇa does not have to observe Ekādaśī. It is only on the next day that this *mahāprasāda* should be distributed. However, Gadādhara-Gaura observe *nirjalā*, because they are acting as devotees in order to provide us with an example.

QUESTION: If in the morning after Ekādaśī, one drinks water before the specified time for breaking the fast, is it considered as if one has not followed Ekādaśī at all? What does one do? If, because of health reasons, one cannot fast from water, what should be done?

ANSWER: If you are not doing *nirjalā*, you can drink as much water as the body needs to function healthily. The sense is that one should reduce one's intake on this day, and just take as much as the body needs.

Breaking the fast is done by eating something or drinking water at a certain time the next morning. Drinking water can break the fast or does not break it. It depends on your consciousness. If you drink water with the consciousness, "I want to break the fast," then the fast is broken. For those who are doing *nirjalā*, taking *caraṇāmṛta* on Ekādaśī is not considered as breaking the fast; but the next morning one can break the fast with *caraṇāmṛta*.

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QUESTION: Regarding the Vaiṣṇava calendar and Ekādaśī, should we follow Mahārāja's calendar, or is there some other way?

ANSWER: This *pañjikā* (calendar) is made according to this particular place, Vrindavan. You should follow according to where you are in the world.



QUESTION: Should we then follow the ISKCON calendar?

ANSWER: Yes, if it is made for that place, you should follow that.<sup>3</sup>

QUESTION: But sometimes ISKCON does not have the same calculation as Mahārāja?

ANSWER: In that case, you can ask Mahārāja. You need to give the timings of the local calendar, then Mahārāja will advise whether it is right or wrong. There is no other way, unless one knows how to do the calculations.

QUESTION: So we have to check if the calculations are different where we are from Vrindavan?

ANSWER: No, it is not in comparison with Vrindavan. The calculations are according to that place. Even if the fasting date is different from the fasting date at Vrindavan, it could be right, and even if it is the same, it could be wrong.

QUESTION: What should be done? Does Mahārāja have to calculate for every town where we are?

ANSWER: That is the only way.

QUESTION: There are about twelve towns here.

ANSWER: There is no solution for it, because most people do not know how to calculate or they follow the *smārta* system. Even some *sādhus* are calculating according to the Bengal *pañjikā*. But that is not proper, because Bengal *pañjikā* is not applicable at Vrindavan or Rādhā Kuṇḍa. Some people follow Benares time. Since not many people have studied *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, they make mistakes, and Mahārāja actually started *pañjikā* only for this reason. Initially there was a lot of opposition from these people, but this has changed.

QUESTION: Was the opposition due to the fact that the Vaiṣṇava way of calculating is different from the *smārtas*?

ANSWER: Yes.

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<sup>3</sup> Here Mahārāja is referring only to Ekādaśī dates and not to other Vaiṣṇava fasting days or times.

**QUESTION:** It is stated that one should not perform *śrāddha* on Ekādaśī. What does that mean?

**ANSWER:** *Śrāddha* is a ceremony which is performed for the forefathers. It is not *śraddhā* (meaning faith), but *śrāddha* with a long "a" in the beginning.

**QUESTION:** But why should one not perform this *śrāddha* ceremony on Ekādaśī?

**ANSWER:** In *śrāddha*, you have to offer *pinḍa* (oblations), which consists of grains. For Vaiṣṇavas it is forbidden to eat grains on Ekādaśī. So forefathers, assuming they are Vaiṣṇavas, will not accept the offering. So we do not perform this ceremony on Ekādaśī.

## 39. Emotions

**QUESTION:** Spiritual feelings are like God's energies, but we have not experienced spiritual feelings on the material platform. What is the difference between spiritual and material feelings?

**ANSWER:** The difference between them is like the difference between a conscious object and inert matter. *Ādhyātmika* (spiritual) means that which is related to the spirit, or that which is related to the spiritual world or spiritual objects. Material is that which is related to matter. Related to matter means everything in this entire material world that is unconscious. The difference between matter and spirit is that matter is unconscious and spirit is conscious. Spiritual feelings are transcendental. They are full of *ānanda* (bliss) or the *śakti* (potency) of Bhagavān. Material feelings are material, and their result is always misery. So, spirit and matter are different.

**QUESTION:** Do sentiments become purified when one progresses in spiritual life?

**ANSWER:** People have material sentiments and when they participate in devotional activities, their sentiments are also material, unless they become purified.

**QUESTION:** Do material sentiments help one in the beginning of spiritual life?

ANSWER: People in the material world use their mind, body, and senses only for material purposes, therefore when someone comes to spiritual life, until the time when he becomes fully dedicated to the spirit, or Bhagavān, he will continue to have material sentiments. Although he may think that he is in spiritual life, he is actually in material life. Only when one is fully dedicated and fully situated on the devotional platform, will sentiments develop spiritually; otherwise, his sentiments will remain material. Due to his sentiments being material, he will have obstacles, because he mistakes something material as spiritual. This creates an obstacle to his progress.

QUESTION: Does it mean that when one comes to the level of *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, his sentiments will become spiritual?

ANSWER: Yes, if one is fully dedicated.

QUESTION: Mahārāja, would it be correct to think that until one can control his sentiments, one must be careful not to enjoy materially?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: How does one become purified?

ANSWER: Performing devotional service will purify you. When one performs devotional service, one loses interest in material sentiments and develops interest in spiritual sentiments.

QUESTION: Does “fully dedicated” mean having no other interest separate from the guru?

ANSWER: Yes. If you have separate interests, then your sentiments will follow those interests.

## 40. Enthusiasm

QUESTION: Now that we have come in contact with something genuine, I feel sometimes that I have no more strength to surrender, as this was already used up in the past. I was stronger before, but now I am weak. What to do?

ANSWER: It is natural that whenever somebody takes up a process, he will be very enthusiastic and afterwards this enthusiasm will decrease. You do not only lose enthusiasm because you have come from another path to this one. Even while you follow this process, as time passes, you can become less enthusiastic. This enthusiasm is not real enthusiasm, but actually a product of ignorance. Even on this path, one is more enthusiastic before taking initiation than after taking initiation.

However, on the real path of *bhakti*, there is no decrease. Enthusiasm always increases, because it is based on proper knowledge and understanding, and not on some kind of ignorance or fanaticism. Therefore, one should try to understand it properly, and when you understand it, your enthusiasm will continue to increase and not decrease. *Bhakti* (and real enthusiasm) is based on understanding and experience, and false enthusiasm is based on ignorance and improper experience. This is called *prākṛta* stage, or the beginning platform, and it is always like that.

## 41. Envy

QUESTION: What shall we do if we envy others or if others envy us?

ANSWER: If you feel envious, and you know that you are feeling it, then give it up, because it is improper and you know it. If others are feeling envious towards you, then there is not much you can do about that. Best is to keep away from them and avoid their association. There are always people who hate you or are envious of you, and you cannot change them.

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QUESTION: Is envy directed towards God?

ANSWER: Envy may be directed towards Bhagavān's nature, His creation, and the living beings. Envy is not towards Bhagavān, because the person does not know Bhagavān. But due to his selfish nature, he wants to exploit other people and material nature.

In *uttama-bhakti* this envious mentality is given up. This comes by associating with *mahat* (saintly people), which means guru. An example is given in the beginning of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, where the story is told how Nārada Muni received the association of devotees



of Bhagavān. He then performed service to them and because of that, he developed a taste for hearing. He would sit and listen to the devotees. Although he was a young boy, he had the qualification to be a disciple because he was very well behaved, had control over his senses, and wasn't frivolous but very obedient. For that reason, Nārada was blessed by those *mahats*. They had equal vision and did not discriminate; yet they gave their blessings to Nārada Muni and not to others. Due to their blessings, he lost all interest in material life.

*Uttama-bhakti* is considered superior (*para-dharma*), because the other *dharmas* do not free you from your envious nature.

## 42. Equal Vision—Discrimination

**QUESTION:** How does a devotee apply the equal vision referred to in the Gītā 5.18?

**ANSWER:**

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne  
brāhmaṇe gavi hastini  
śunī caiva śva-pāke ca  
paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

“The wise look with equal vision on a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.”

This verse is an instruction for *jñānīs*. In *jñāna-mārga* one has to be free from *rāga* (attachment) and *dveṣa* (hatred), otherwise one cannot make any advancement in renunciation.

A devotee sees that his Lord is everywhere. *Īśvara* exists in all *jīvas*. A devotee has to give up the concept of “I am the enjoyer.” If he doesn't, he cannot make progress. Therefore, the instruction is given that the guru is worshipable, so that one does not enjoy and exploit the guru for one's own pleasure. The *jñānī* has to see everybody as equal, otherwise he does not make progress, whereas the devotee has to give up the mood, “I am the enjoyer.” A devotee does not see everybody as equal (as the *jñānī* does). He makes distinctions. For instance, a *madhyama-bhakta* makes friends with devotees, is neutral to the envious, and gives mercy to ignorant people.

## 43. Festivals

**QUESTION:** What should be our frame of consciousness on appearance days like tomorrow's Gaura Pūrṇimā? Is there any special type of observance or way one should think about it?

**ANSWER:** As far as the mood is concerned, it is the same as you have every day. As far as doing something special is concerned, that is a social act. Socially, you do something, a big show, a big worship, a big feast and *abhiṣeka*. Otherwise your consciousness is the same as any other day.

**QUESTION:** Do people who are doing more service on those days have an external attitude of devotion that is not part of their normal consciousness?

**ANSWER:** Yes. It is always social. Some social custom exists, so you follow it, but it is only for a social purpose.

**QUESTION:** Do we fast on those days?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Is there absolutely no spiritual benefit for those people who are celebrating these days out of social custom?

**ANSWER:** What do you mean by spiritual benefit?

**QUESTION:** No benefit in their consciousness?

**ANSWER:** If they become conscious of Bhagavān and their mind becomes fixed on Him, then that is the benefit. If that is not happening, then obviously there is no benefit. If it reminds them of Bhagavān and makes them inclined towards devotional service, then that is the benefit.

There are two features to this celebration:

1) One is that a devotee worships Bhagavān every day and maintains a devotional consciousness. So, if he worships Bhagavān also on this particular day, then he is anyway remembering Him. There is nothing extra in that.

2) The second feature is that a function or celebration ultimately means food distribution. Pleasing people is the end result of this. This has a practical benefit, as it means that people will praise you,

you can collect donations, or get support in some other way. Apart from this benefit, a devotee is always remembering Bhagavān. If he does some service for Bhagavān, there is no show involved in that. But the general tendency is that you host a festival so that many people come together and eat. In doing that, everybody feels satisfied, and when people are satisfied, you will receive support from them.

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**QUESTION:** When Śrī Caitanya was on this earth, was His birthday (*jayanī*) celebrated or did it come after His disappearance?

**ANSWER:** This started only after His disappearance and was not practiced during His presence. It is mainly celebrated to remember Him, so that His teachings and His life are remembered. We should remember His activities, what He did, and what He preached. This is how it is celebrated.

## 44. Fear

**QUESTION:** How can one become free from fear, because in the material world everyone is fearful?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* eliminates fear. The prime fear is the fear of death, which everybody has in the depth of his or her mind. And why do people fear death? They fear death because it takes away everything, especially the objects and people you are attached to. Death brings separation from everything up to the extent that it even separates you from this body, which you are attached to the most.

*Bhakti* makes you fearless, because in *bhakti* you have proper education. *Bhakti* also gives you knowledge and it teaches you, not only spiritual knowledge, but also practical knowledge, as to how to live (successfully) in this world. Besides the fear of death, you may be afraid of other people, diseases, or animals. So *bhakti* teaches you how to lead a fearless life. For instance, if you are practicing *bhakti*, you are disciplined in your eating habits. You do not eat food that is very *tāmasika* or which may cause sickness, therefore you remain healthy; and because you follow a discipline, you are fearless. If one is not disciplined, and thus engaged in illegal activities, one will be full of fear. Fear is also present in those who have a criminal mentality, but if they become devotees, then there is no fear.

Fear arises because of attachment to the body, and *bhakti* removes the attachment. *Bhakti* is proper knowledge. It removes attachment, for attachment is based on ignorance. *Bhakti* is not some kind of misconception. *Bhakti* is described in *śāstra* and also what you hear from a proper guru. *Bhakti* makes you fearless, although problems may come. The Pāṇḍavas, Dhruva Mahārāja, and Prahlāda Mahārāja all had to face difficulties. What to speak of them, even Śrī Rāmacandra and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who are God Themselves had to combat *asuric*, evil-minded people. Such people always exist, and you can never change them.

Even when under difficult circumstances, *bhakti* makes you fearless. People have financial fears, "What will happen if I do not earn money?" A devotee, however, remains fearless under all circumstances, because he has faith in God. *Bhakti* is the only means to remain fearless.

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**QUESTION:** I realize that fear is my motivation in many of my dealings. This comes from my childhood, but even though I realize it, it is hard for me to change. In *bhakti*, it is stated that one acts out of love. Can you give some advice as to how I can deal with this?

**ANSWER:** Knowledge and proper understanding can remove fear. When there is fear, the heart becomes contracted and one's feelings become very much compressed. If you compare the heart with a lotus, then you can understand that just as a lotus closes at night, a person's heart closes from fear. That is the effect of fear. The general tendency is to try and get rid of the situation that you believe is causing the fear. However, it may not be in your control to change the situation. Fear happens because of ignorance. When you have proper knowledge and the proper understanding, there is no cause of fear.

If somebody were to shout at the cows and beat them, then the cows would also feel fearful and would not go close to that person. You can make the cows do things out of fear, but when they do not fear you, they will come to you and are completely uninhibited in their movements.

Generally, in childhood children are controlled by fear. Due to fear they work and become disciplined. However, this fear can continue later on in their lives and manifest in their minds. Therefore, one should act with the proper understanding. Ask your mind these



questions: "Why am I fearful? What is the cause of it?" If there is a proper cause, then you can try to remove the problem that is causing the fear. And when there is no cause, then why should you fear?

## 45. Free Will

**QUESTION:** Since God is *sarvajña*, omniscient, does He know when we will surrender?

**ANSWER:** Living entities are conscious, and as conscious beings, they have the doership or ego for taking action. They can choose to remain in the material world or become free from it.

God knows everything, therefore He comes to instruct people. Being omniscient, if He didn't instruct people, it would be a fault on His part. But it is up to you to accept these instructions or not.

Generally, people in the material world are very limited in their vision. They do not take good instructions and are merely interested in securing a place of residence, something to eat, and some sense pleasure—association with pure *asat*. That is our limitation of the material senses, and God knows it.

God also gives the result of our *karma*. Whatever *karma* one performs, God knows the outcome of it. If you take to spiritual life, you will be released from *karma*, and that is why Bhagavān instructs us. He also knows that when He instructs us, many people do not take to spiritual life, but rather use these instructions to fulfill their sense desires. God knows all of this, and therefore He is known as omniscient. He knows the past, present, and future. Still, He gives instructions, knowing well that people will only use them for material gain. For example, as a teacher you know that some of your students may not learn. But you do not become discouraged if they do not take your good advice and change their ways. You can only encourage them to make the right choice.

**QUESTION:** So then it is the free decision of the living entity?

**ANSWER:** Ultimately nothing is completely free. God has given us the choice either to take the wrong path or the right path. You make the choice. You may know that this is right and that is wrong, but still you may make the wrong choice.

**QUESTION:** Is that actually the only choice we have, the choice between wrong and right?

**ANSWER:** The other choices are meaningless. From Kṛṣṇa's point of view, what is the meaning of other choices? Even from our point of view, it has no meaning. If someone in America chooses a job in the computer field, and another chooses in medicine or the arts, then what difference does it make from the spiritual point of view, if both are going to live a material life? What is the value of any of these choices?

**QUESTION:** When someone chooses to take to the path of devotional service, is this due to the special mercy of Īśvara, and outside the person's normal course of karmic path?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is not the result of *karma*. Actually, when one's *karma* is coming to an end, it is only then that the living entity accepts *bhakti*. The living entity is a conscious being. Therefore, he has to choose *bhakti*, just as he chooses other things. Spiritual instructions are to be voluntarily accepted by the living entity.

Generally, people do not take to *bhakti* sincerely. If they accept it, they do so for material reasons. This is the natural trend. To begin with, people do not like the guru. Guru means spiritual education. Basically, people do not have a liking for spiritual education. Therefore, they do not take to it and nobody can change that.

There was a *brāhmaṇa* who was not doing anything. Inspired by others, he went to do some austerities. Then the Sun god, the deity whom he worshiped, put some wealth on the path that the *brāhmaṇa* usually walked. When the *brāhmaṇa* was taking his usual walk, suddenly he thought, "Let me see if I can walk with my eyes closed." As he walked with closed eyes, he passed the wealth. We behave similarly with regard to spiritual life.

Spiritual knowledge is available to us. Kṛṣṇa gives it to us, but if we close our eyes, we cannot blame others for that. Therefore, we should make some effort to try to understand this knowledge, imbibe it, and put it into practice. It is meant for all.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean that we should aspire for spiritual knowledge to the best of our ability?

**ANSWER:** As I said yesterday, make your best effort. Even if you are not successful, continue with it and there will be no loss. If you do not make any effort, there is no gain. You should do service according to your ability.

People ask, "If I give up material life, then what will happen?" There will be no loss. Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad Gītā* that there is no loss on this path. This means that even if you make some mistake, there is no loss. At least you are on the right track. But if you do not take to this process, then you will get nothing.

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**QUESTION:** Does something like a free will exist?

**ANSWER:** Free will is a white lie. Everything is under the control of *kāla*, *karma*, and *guṇa*—meaning time, past *karma*, and the material *guṇas*. When these things are controlling everything, how can there be any free will? We have will, but it is conditioned by our past *karma*.

Apart from the path of *bhakti*, other paths talk of free will. For instance, the Jains say that you can become like God. And if you follow the Māyāvāda path, they will also tell you, "Yes, you are the Supreme Reality." Everybody talks like this. It is only in *bhakti* that we are taught that God is the controller and not us. He controls everything.

## 46. Ghosts

**QUESTION:** In Āyurvedic *śāstra* there are some diseases classified as caused by *bhūtas*, like ghosts or demons. Was that because at that time, they couldn't determine the cause of these diseases or because ghostly beings actually exist? The *Caraka-saṁhitā* and *Vāgbhaṭṭa-saṁhitā* both say that under particular conditions, such as when you are very angry, ghosts or demons can enter the body, and depending on that being, different characteristics will be manifested in the body.

**ANSWER:** There are no ghosts. It's only a psychological disturbance that happens because of disturbances in the bodily constitution.

Ghostly species existed before, but now they exist in human form. A species is known by its characteristics. Now the characteristics of ghosts are seen in human beings who act crazy, wander with no direction, are frivolous, have unclean habits, cause trouble, and possess others. Ghost species, as such, do not exist anymore, because they have taken human bodies. Previously they were created

as a species, but at that time there were human beings whom they could possess. Now even human beings do not exist. Ghosts do not possess ghosts. When human beings behave like ghosts, then there are no more ghosts, because whom will they possess? [This was spoken in a lighter mood]

**QUESTION:** All these conditions can now be purely described as imbalances of *doṣas*—physical and mental imbalances?

**ANSWER:** Yes. All this ghostly business is not applicable anymore.

## 47. Guṇas

**QUESTION:** *Bhakti* frees us from the three *guṇas*, but still the body gets sick, and disease comes from the lower *guṇas*. How are we to understand this?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* means to do service to Bhagavān, not desiring anything else. A devotee has only this consciousness. He does not even desire liberation up to *sārūpya* or *sālokya*. Therefore, why would he desire that this body, which is made of matter, be made transcendental?

When it is said that a devotee is free from the material *guṇas*, it means that his consciousness is not influenced, and not that his body does not change. The body is made of matter and has material qualities. It will feel hungry and thirsty. It will also become old and die. But these activities have nothing to do with devotion. Just because somebody is getting older, it does not mean that he is not a devotee or that he is under the influence of three *guṇas*. It is his body, which is under the influence, because it is made of the *guṇas*, but the person is not the body. His consciousness is transcendental. Therefore he is situated in transcendental consciousness. He does not desire his body to be transcendental. Even when God comes, His body looks like the body of the people here, and He behaves like a human—what to speak of those who are born here and have material bodies. God also does not want to transgress the rules of nature. Otherwise, He will have to make so many adjustments, because then He would have to change the *prakṛti*, or nature, of a devotee's body. The nature of a devotee's body will continue unchanged, but this is not an obstacle in devotional service, nor does it mean that he is under the influence of the *guṇas*. If a devotee is hungry, he eats, and if he falls sick, he takes medicine.



It is not that when one becomes a devotee, he just does *bhajan* and Rādhārāṇī will supply food. Many times people think like that. They give the example of Rūpa Gosvāmī, and how one time when he was absorbed in his *bhajan*, Rādhārāṇī brought him milk. Why would he want that to happen? Does he want to do service or be served? Therefore, a devotee does not desire anything like that. His consciousness is fixed on Kṛṣṇa. So he is not under the influence of the *guṇas*.

## 48. Guru-tattva

**QUESTION:** Previously we heard that Balarāma and Nityānanda are the *ādiguru*, and also that the guru is a manifestation of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Is that true?

**ANSWER:** These statements are not based on *śāstra*. It is all right if the people who are propagating this have their own understanding, but they too are supposed to be following *śāstra*.

Suppose you want a servant to do some favorable personal service. You will train him yourself, because you want the service to be done in a specific way. It is not that you appoint somebody else to train the person. You do it yourself to make sure you get exactly what you want. If some other person trains them, then the service will be done according to that person's mood. It is Kṛṣṇa, whom we are supposed to serve, and it is Kṛṣṇa Himself who takes care of training His people. Kṛṣṇa Himself promises to maintain this process. The guru is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and not anybody else.

Balarāma, Nityānanda, or Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī have different purposes in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, although there is no difference between Balarāma and Nityānanda. They assist Bhagavān in His pastimes, but they are not guru themselves. Nowhere in the *śāstra* does it say that Balarāma is *ādiguru*. Kṛṣṇa Himself says that He manifests Himself as guru (SB 11.17.27):

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān  
navanmanyeta karhicit  
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta  
sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

“Know Me to be the *ācārya*, never disrespect him, and do not find fault in him, thinking him to be a mortal being. Know the guru as embodiment of all the *devas*.

**QUESTION:** We should deal with the guru as Kṛṣṇa. How shall I understand this?

**ANSWER:** This means being respectful, not disobeying, not disrespecting or criticizing the guru. When it is said that the guru is to be treated like God, it means that just as you do not criticize God, you also do not find fault with the guru. You take his instructions as real and authoritative.

**QUESTION:** Should one also learn from the guru how to approach Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** Yes. This is what guru means. Guru means teacher, and this is why we are here.

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**QUESTION:** In the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* it is said that the *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru* are both manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, and one should see them as identical. However, sometimes the *śikṣā-guru* is different from the *dīkṣā-guru* or not even a disciple of the *dīkṣā-guru*. Should the *śikṣā-guru* also be seen as a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** On the path of *bhakti*, *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* are one. You do not have a *dīkṣā-guru* and then the *śikṣā-guru* is somebody else.

That option of having a separate *śikṣā-guru* is only if the *dīkṣā-guru* disappears. Then, in his absence, if one needs to take *śikṣā*, one can take *śikṣā* from a guru or a qualified person who has the same *bhāva*, or mood, following the same teachings as one's own guru. Otherwise, *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* are one.

Sometimes, if the guru disappears and one needs to take *veṣa-dīkṣā*, that means *bābāji-veṣa*, then one takes it from a person of the same *bhāva*. Still, it is the *dīkṣā-guru*'s *paramparā* which is accepted, and not the *paramparā* of the *veṣa-guru*. That means, if the disciple has to explain to which *paramparā* he belongs, then he should give the line of his *dīkṣā-guru* and not the line of the person from whom he has taken *veṣa-dīkṣā*.

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**QUESTION:** Do only *brāhmaṇas* have the right to become guru or can one be from a Gosvāmī family?

ANSWER: In *śāstra* it is stated that only *brāhmaṇas* have the right to become gurus.

The first transgression of this statement was by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. Although Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura was not a *brāhmaṇa*, he gave initiation to Gaṅgā Nārāyaṇa Cakravartī, who was a *brāhmaṇa*. This caused a total revolt in society at that time, so much so that this situation was even brought before the king. The king decided that it was all right in the case of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, because he possessed such extraordinary qualifications. But this should be taken as the exception and not become an example for others.

When I was a young boy, my *gurudeva* went with me to Rādhā Kuṇḍa and introduced me to different Vaiṣṇavas. At that time a *bābājī* said to my *gurudeva*, "It is a pity that I do not have such a qualified disciple." Later I asked my *guruji* what he meant with that remark, and my *gurudeva* answered, "He comes from the *cāṇḍāla* caste, and for him it would have been an upgrading of his status if he would have had a *brāhmaṇa* as a disciple.

QUESTION: I read in the Upaniṣads that some *brāhmaṇa* accepted a king as his guru and studied from him, because that particular knowledge was known only to the king. So is it an exception?

ANSWER: Yes, this is an exception. When there is no qualified *brāhmaṇa* guru, then even a qualified non-*brāhmaṇa* can be guru. Otherwise, the flow of knowledge would be lost. If a non-*brāhmaṇa* becomes guru, then it creates a disturbance in society. If a *vaiśya*, for example, becomes guru, he will make a business out of it. A *kṣatriya* will use the position of the guru to control and manipulate others or create politics. A *brāhmaṇa*, however, has the natural inclination to follow and study the *śāstra*. Only he, if qualified, teaches *śāstra* without motive and not with the intention of earning money out of it.

QUESTION: But are not Vaiṣṇavas considered higher than even *brāhmaṇas*?

ANSWER: Vaiṣṇavas should be respected, no matter from whatever *varṇa* or caste they come. Vaiṣṇavas have the *acyuta gotra*. In the past, kings did not rule over *brāhmaṇas* and those who had *acyuta gotra* (Vaiṣṇavas). They did not claim taxes from them.

If a Vaiṣṇava has the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, he should be respected as such, but this does not mean that he actually becomes a *brāhmaṇa* and should fulfill the functions and duties of a *brāhmaṇa*. Only *brāhmaṇas* can become guru.

**QUESTION:** Only *brāhmaṇas* are allowed to become gurus, but there are many books which quote verses to prove that everyone can become a guru. For example, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 8.128 says:

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya  
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*

“Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa* a *sannyāsī*, or a *śūdra*, regardless of what he is, he can become a guru if he knows the reality about of Kṛṣṇa.”

And there is also another verse in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 7.128:

*yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa  
āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa*

“Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this way become a guru and try to liberate everyone in this land.”

How do we reconcile this?

**ANSWER:** Let this person at least be *tattva-vettā*, because the verse says: *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya*. Not that you just say, “I am *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā*.” If you want to follow this instruction, then become *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā*, or a knower of the reality about Kṛṣṇa. To become *tattva-vettā*, you have to study *śāstra*. You cannot become a *tattva-vettā* without studying and following *śāstra*. If you become a *tattva-vettā* and follow *śāstra*, and if you are not a *brāhmaṇa*, then you would not like to become a guru. You are not going to become *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā* just by reading prayers.

You have to understand the verse in the context within which it is spoken. Is it defining who a guru is? Did Mahāprabhu give this order to a specific person or is it a general instruction?

**QUESTION:** What was the purpose of Mahāprabhu speaking this verse?

**ANSWER:** That is what I am trying to say. You have to see in what context the verse was spoken. Is it spoken in defining a guru?

**QUESTION:** No.

**ANSWER:** Then? Mahāprabhu told Sanātana Gosvāmī to write *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, and He instructed him in the subject matter. He also told him about the qualifications of a guru. You read it and see



if it matches with the verse from *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*. You have to see in which context this verse was spoken. For example, people say, "Do not do cow sevā, otherwise you will become a cow, because Bharata Mahārāja became a deer by serving a deer." Many times people say this about me, because I am doing cow service. They say that I will become a cow in my next life. That is not the purpose of the story of Bharata Mahārāja. The purpose of that story is to show that if you give up devotional service and become absorbed in material things, you will take birth according to your consciousness at the time of death. Kṛṣṇa says in Gītā 8.6:

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ  
tyajaty ante kalevaram  
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya  
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitah*

"O son of Kuntī, whatever object one thinks of while dying, that and that only he attains, being constantly absorbed in thoughts of it."

This incident with Bharata Mahārāja also shows that *bhakti* is never lost. Even when he became a deer, he remained a devotee. He remembered Kṛṣṇa. This is the purpose of the story. So you have to be conscious of the context in which it was written and not simply use a *śloka* from somewhere to support your opinion and reinforce your own conclusions. What about the other *ślokas* which say that a *brāhmaṇa* should be guru? Then they will all be wrong. You have to reconcile the contradictory statements of *śāstra*, otherwise people will be misled in the name of *śāstra*.

■

**QUESTION:** When the guru is not an *uttamā-bhakta*, can he still give initiation if he is concerned that his disciples are receiving instruction from an *uttamā* devotee?

**ANSWER:** *Śāstra* says that only an *uttama* devotee should give initiation. If he is not on that level and still accepts disciples, then he goes against *śāstra*. He must have some other motives, such as amassing wealth and followers. He is like a shopkeeper who has many clothes in his shop. These items are not for his personal use but for selling. Similarly, these so-called gurus keep temples and deities, but they do not personally worship them. Rather, they engage other people in worshipping. This is all for business. Most people have a cheating mentality, and therefore they are attracted to cheaters like this.

**QUESTION:** If a guru is sick or old, can he order *ritvik* disciples to give initiation in his name?

**ANSWER:** If a guru is sick or old and not able to give initiation, he should stop accepting disciples. He should allow his disciples to accept disciples themselves. Otherwise it is only business, as was already explained. Why should he not allow his disciples to initiate? There is no such thing as a *ritvik* guru.

**QUESTION:** What is the position of *caitya-guru*?

**ANSWER:** *Caitya-guru* is Bhagavān Himself, who gives inspiration from within.

■

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of this terms *sarvajña* (all-knowing)? What is the consciousness of a devotee who has this *sarvajñatā*? If I hear that there is someone who knows and can tell me about my past, present, and future, then he must have some mystical abilities that tell him what's going to happen in future.

**ANSWER:** *Sarvajña* is only Kṛṣṇa and nobody else. There is no need for the guru or any devotee to be *sarvajña*, because this has nothing to do with *bhakti*. The purpose of *bhakti* is to perform service to Bhagavān without any material motives.

Mystical phenomena are in no way related to *bhakti*. This idea is propagated to attract others or create some awe and reverence about a person. These types of statements even a *jyotiṣhi* (astrologer) can make. They can tell you about your past, present, and future. The subject matter related to one's life is very limited. Even if you practice it a little bit, and even if you do not know much, but simply talk about a few things, people will be impressed. Everyone has some health, family, and financial problems. You can make predictions about these things, and one of your predictions will fit. You don't need great knowledge to do this. There is no such thing as *sarvajña*.

Inspiration comes from Kṛṣṇa, and He is the one who gives knowledge. The guru does not know your past, present, and future, because that does not serve any purpose. His job is to give knowledge of *sāstra*. That is what the guru knows, and he is *sarvajña* in that. That he knows perfectly. Some people will talk about things such as *sarvajñatā* if they want to mesmerize others. Such talks go on, but they are not true.

## 49. Guru—Disciple

**QUESTION:** You said that if one is not prepared to accept instructions, then one should not take initiation. Are you suggesting that one must be fully prepared to do absolutely anything that the guru says before taking initiation, or can one take initiation and slowly try to reach the point of full surrender?

**ANSWER:** There are two paths, *pravṛtti-mārga* and *nivṛtti-mārga*:

1) *Pravṛtti-mārga*, the path of material attachment, is when the person is attached to his body and things related to the body, and he wants to derive pleasure from that. His interest is not in getting out of the material world, but remaining here and getting a comfortable situation in the material world—in this life and the next. Whatever he does, whether he follows Vedic processes or other processes, his interest is to get a comfortable material situation. Even if he takes *dīkṣā* and follows some religious principles, his purpose is ultimately material enjoyment. This is one path.

2) *Nivṛtti-mārga*, the other path, is where the person understands that material existence is ultimately painful and miserable, and he is not interested in taking birth after birth. He wants to get out of it and understands that the process for that is to take shelter of Bhagavān. Thus his goal is to attain *ānanda*, or bliss, in the association of Bhagavān. He takes to the spiritual path, beginning with *dīkṣā*, because he wants to finish his existence in the material world. That is called *nivṛtti-mārga*.

The first step is to deliberate on this properly and decide what one wants. Whether one wants to be on the path of *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*—material enjoyment or the spiritual world, in either case, one has to take *dīkṣā*.

There are people who come to me to take *dīkṣā* and *bābājī-veśa*. So I ask them, "Why do you want this?" And they may say, "I want to go to Bengal, make disciples, and collect money." Then I ask them, "Why don't you just go without it?" Then they say, "People will ask me who my guru is. Then I need an answer, so I have to have a guru." So I give them *dīkṣā*, and they go away, make disciples, collect money, and do their business. They are truthful about it and are following *pravṛtti-mārga*.

Similarly, one has to be also truthful on the *nivṛtti-mārga*, because on the *nivṛtti-mārga* the guru has to be accepted as God, and one

has to have the same interest as the guru. One has to follow his instructions and remain under his discipline.

*Dikṣā* entails two things: It gives us *divya jñāna* (transcendental knowledge), and it removes one's sins. That is why it has two syllables, *dik-ṣā*: *divya jñānam yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam*. *Divya jñāna* means the knowledge of the *svarūpa* of the *jīva*. The *svarūpa* of the *jīva* is that he is a servant of Bhagavān. If one sincerely accepts *dikṣā* from a qualified guru, then Bhagavān actually becomes pleased and accepts one as His own person. When Bhagavān accepts the disciple, the latter becomes free from sins, because now he is no longer going to act independently or frivolously. He is going to work under the order of the guru. Therefore, there is no more *karma*, sin, or anything else which is the result of a material or independent life. This is why there are no more *papas* (sins) for him. However, one must be truthful about it. The process is not that one takes *dikṣā* and after that, one acts independently. If one is truthful, then it works. After taking *dikṣā*, one should learn the principles of *bhāgavata-dharma* from the guru and follow them. This is *nivṛtti-mārga*.

Previously, even people who followed *pravṛtti-mārga* had a guru. Of course, the gurus for *pravṛtti-mārga* were different from the gurus of *nivṛtti-mārga*. But even on *pravṛtti-mārga*, they meticulously followed the instructions of their guru. Now, however, everything is a joke. People are not interested in *nivṛtti*. That is why I say, "If one is not sincere, then one should not take *dikṣā*." Why does one have to take it? If one's interest is only in material pleasure, then there is so much facility for that in the *māyā* world. Why does one take to this spiritual path and make a business out of it? *Satāmmārga stabdhena dūṣitaḥ*. This is a path of *sat-puruṣa*, saintly people, which means those who do not have a cheating mentality and are truthful. This path is called *sanmārga*. The word *sat* has different meanings. It means truthful and sincere, and it also means the path of Bhagavān, who is also truthful. We should come to this path with a sincere desire to follow it exactly, and then we should accept *dikṣā* with sincerity.

**QUESTION:** Can one gradually work towards this goal?

**ANSWER:** One has to decide that this is what one wants. It is not possible that you want this, but your real interest is in something else. You should decide in your mind whether you want to follow *pravṛtti-mārga* or *nivṛtti-mārga*. This is the first decision that one should make. And if you want to follow *nivṛtti-mārga*, then you should be sincere about it. Obviously, if it is called *mārga* (path),



you have to follow it and make progress gradually. However, the main thing I am trying to say is that people are not even clear as to what they want. They come to one path, but their goal is another. That is why I am saying, the goal must be made absolutely clear in one's mind.

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**QUESTION:** When the guru does not give instructions to the disciple, does that mean that the disciple is situated on the *pravṛtti-mārga*?

**ANSWER:** If the guru feels that the disciple is not qualified to take instructions, why would he burden him? He is not going to take instructions anyway. I do not disturb such disciples.

**QUESTION:** So if one is not receiving instructions, would that be a sign that one is not on the *nivṛtti-mārga*? I never see you giving instructions to your disciples, does that mean they are all on the *pravṛtti-mārga*?

**ANSWER:** Whether *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti-mārga*, the person has to decide, because one has to follow a guru on either path. As far as instructions are concerned, it is not true that I do not give instructions or that this is my style. When a person is qualified, if I feel that someone is surrendered, or if you come and tell me that you want to follow and you ask for instructions, then, as I said earlier, I will give instructions.

However, when I see that such is not the case, then why should I give instructions? I know that the person will not follow, and this will ultimately create a dangerous situation for him. He will commit the offense of disrespecting the guru. This is the path of God, the path of truthfulness, and if one takes *dīkṣā*, then one is supposed to follow the order of the guru without deliberation whether it is just or unjust. There is no such deliberation on this path after taking *dīkṣā*. The guru is not going to say anything when the person does not want to follow. On this path, once you take a guru, then there is no such deliberation that the guru can be wrong, or that you have the thought, "Why is he asking me this?" This is not acceptable in *bhakti*.

That is what one has to decide before taking *dīkṣā*, and after *dīkṣā* one must follow. If one is sincere and truthful, then the instruction will be given. One must first understand whether one's interest is in

material pleasure. If one wishes to give up material pleasures, only then should one take to this process.

Sometimes, someone becomes naturally interested in such pleasures. Then they do not need such deliberation. They naturally like this process, as in my own case. I was not given any instructions, but I naturally liked this path of *bhakti*. It was only later on that I studied, and whatever I studied, it was just a confirmation of my own feeling that one has to surrender like this, and one has to follow the guru without any deliberation whether he is right or wrong. I was already like that to begin with. If that happens, that is the best.

When that is not the case, then one should properly deliberate. It is not a joke or something to be treated lightly but rather a very serious process. Only if one is seriously interested in it, then one should follow. Otherwise, there is no need. One's heart will know whether one is on the path of *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*.

**QUESTION:** Nowadays most people who approach a guru have had negative experiences about surrendering to a guru, so it is very hard to develop trust to surrender again.

**ANSWER:** If that is the case, then do not take *dīkṣā*. After taking *dīkṣā*, divorce is not possible on this path. Therefore, one has to deliberate before choosing. If one wants to be *āstika* (theistic), which means to be a believer of God, then at least one should believe in God—meaning to follow His words in the form of *śāstra*. To accept that the guru is God is very difficult to follow, but at least follow God, and what He is saying. At least, have trust in His words, but people do not even have trust in God's words.

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**QUESTION:** Is this just a personal choice? If somebody is not so qualified, but still wants to follow this process, can he act like that?

**ANSWER:** You have to decide what you want to follow. If your interest is in the *nivṛtti-mārga*, then you follow this process.

**QUESTION:** But sometimes this spoon could be too big.

**ANSWER:** The spoon is big or small, depending on your desire. If you firmly desire something, then the big spoon will become small. And if you do not desire it, then the spoon will become very big.

**QUESTION:** How can one come in contact with the proper knowledge, if one does not know what a *śāstrīya* guru is?

**ANSWER:** It is inevitable that there will be unqualified gurus, because people are always looking for ways and means to subsist. Previously, such things were also there, and that is why there are descriptions of *bhakti*, *bhakti-ābhāsa*, etc.

Those who are inquisitive about *uttama-śreya*, the highest welfare, will have to do some searching for it. If they are sincere, then they will find the proper guru, but if they are not sincere, they will definitely go to an unqualified guru, because their interests will match. So, it depends whether the person is really interested or not in the ultimate, which is *uttama-bhakti*. If he is, then he will not be satisfied until he finds a qualified guru.

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**QUESTION:** Is it already determined who is going to get which guru? Does the guru know in advance who his disciple will be?

**ANSWER:** It is not fixed or determined who is going to get which guru. It is *Īśvara* who gives the inspiration, and depending on that, one will decide whether someone is his guru or not. Whether one is on the spiritual or the material path, everything is under the control of *Īśvara*. Since He is the controller, He will inspire the person, and that depends on one's qualification.

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**QUESTION:** I wonder why we have met Mahārāja. Is it a matter of luck, past lives (*sukṛti*), or something else?

**ANSWER:** The cause for this is only Bhagavān's grace. When Bhagavān wants to uplift somebody, He inspires him to approach His own devotee. It is not the result of any *sukṛti*.

**QUESTION:** It is just luck?

**ANSWER:** You can call it luck. Because *bhakti* comes only from God, so it is arranged by His grace.

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**QUESTION:** What can we do, who are in an in-between stage of being not surrendered, but desiring it? Knowing that we cannot take shelter of other paths, what is this stage called and what can be done at this stage?

**ANSWER:** The meaning of *dīkṣā* is to accept the guru as authority and follow him. It is for this purpose only that one takes *dīkṣā*. If one has a desire for this, then one should follow it. This is what one has to do. Just as in the material world, if you want to do something, you have to follow some authority. Even if you are driving down the road, you follow certain rules. But if you flout these rules, you get into trouble.

The spiritual path is similar. There are instructions of *sāstra*, guru, or Kṛṣṇa, and if you desire to attain Kṛṣṇa, then you have to follow His instructions. One has to understand this, and if one is actually interested in it, then one should do it. Otherwise, one will do whatever one wants to do. Instead of following the guru, one follows one's own mind. If one wants to follow one's mind, then what instruction can be given to such a person? The instruction has no meaning. It is a simple thing. If you accept *dīkṣā* and a guru, then you follow his instructions and remain under his authority. Sometimes people come, take *dīkṣā*, and then they ask, "What do I have to do?" I would then, for example, say, "Do not eat grains on Ekādaśī." However, they would still eat grains, and their own family members would ask them, "If you do not like to follow your guru, then why did you ask him what you should do?" What is the use of taking *dīkṣā* like this?

In the material world you also have to follow. If there is a red light, you have to stop. Then why does one not want to follow the instructions on the spiritual path? I cannot understand the problem. Everywhere you have to follow certain instructions or some rules from some authority. On the spiritual path you also have to follow. What is the difficulty?

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**QUESTION:** If a person desires to surrender fully and follow the guru, should such a person wait until he is fully surrendered before taking *dīkṣā*, or can *dīkṣā* be a boost to propelling that person toward the goal?

**ANSWER:** First one should understand *pravṛtti-mārga* and *nivṛtti-mārga*. If one is interested in *nivṛtti-mārga* and understands it, then one takes *dīkṣā*. If one has taken *dīkṣā* without understanding it,



then one should still try to understand and follow. If one is not fully surrendered, then one should slowly surrender. It should not be that one takes *dikṣā* and has no interest in it. The guru becomes the disciple and the disciple becomes the guru, and then the disciple orders the guru, "Give me this, give me that, and do like this!" This is not the spiritual process. That is what is happening at the present time, because people are turning everything into a business. These gurus say, "Just take the *mantra* from me and then do whatever you want." Due to much corruption, the path of *bhakti* has become degraded, just like the Indian government. This is *anirvacanīya*, indescribable, and there is nothing that can be said about it, or whether it is spiritual or material.

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QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain the *tatra bhāgavatān dharmān* verse further, which speaks about accepting a guru?

ANSWER:

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān  
śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ  
amāyayānuvṛttyā yais  
tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ*

"From the guru, whom one should love as one's own self and as the object of one's devotion, one should learn the principles of *bhakti*, rendering service to him with sincerity. By doing that, Śrī Hari, who is the soul of the Universe and gives Himself to His devotees, is pleased." (SB 11.3.22)

A person inquiring about the ultimate welfare should approach a guru who is expert, who has studied and realized the scriptures, and who is following them. After surrendering to such a guru and taking *dikṣā*, one should render service to him with utmost sincerity, considering oneself as having the same desire or purpose as the guru, cooperating with him, and serving him with a favorable mood. Then one should study *bhāgavata-dharma* from him. *Bhāgavata-dharma* means those words which have been spoken by Bhagavān Himself, which are described in the Eleventh Canto, and which specifically mean *bhakti*. This means following the authoritative footsteps of the *ācāryas*.

This is *uttama-bhakti*, and it has to be learned from the guru. The learning comes by performing service, and then *anartha-nivṛtti* (purification) occurs. Only then will realization happen. Kṛṣṇa Himself says that in SB 11.19.5: *jñāna-vijñāna-sampanno bhaja mām*

*bhakti-bhāvitah* ("One should become endowed with *jñāna* and *vijñāna* and then serve Me with devotion").

*Jñāna* here means scriptural knowledge and *vijñāna* means the realization. So one has to study and also realize. Realization comes by performance of service, which results in *anartha-nivṛtti*. Then one realizes the meaning of *śāstra*. One should study or learn because that pleases Bhagavān.

The guru is considered as the worshipable Lord (*iṣṭa-devatā*), and also dear (*ātmā-devatām*). Kṛṣṇa is pleased if one approaches such a guru, surrenders, renders service, and studies. That is the meaning of the above verse.

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**QUESTION:** How is the guru receptive of our consciousness—is he seeing our mood?

**ANSWER:** The guru has certain qualifications which are given in SB 11.3.21:

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta  
jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam  
śābde pare ca niṣṇātām  
brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

"Therefore, one desirous of knowing the ultimate welfare should resort to a preceptor who is well versed in scripture, has realized the Absolute Reality, and thus is fully peaceful."

So these are the qualification of a guru:

- 1) He is expert in the knowledge of *śāstra*.
- 2) He has realization of it.
- 3) He practices it in his own life.

This is the true meaning of guru, and not that he possesses mystical powers as many people think. People speak of the guru as a mystical man, but these kind of so-called gurus only want to attract and then exploit disciples. Mystical powers have nothing to do with devotional service. Mystical powers are part of the *yoga-mārga*, but not part of *bhakti*. People try to apply methods from other paths to *bhakti* because of its appeal to the common masses.

The characteristics of a disciple are also described in *śāstra*. The guru knows the mentality or psychology of the disciple, which

is not very difficult to understand. Basically, everybody is born from sex life. Therefore, everybody is attracted to sex and other sense pleasures, and to satisfy these pleasures, they want money or fulfill the basic needs related to the body. This is the underlying psychology of every human being, and to understand this does not require any special training. The qualifications of a disciple are described in *śāstra*, but to find such a disciple is not common. The guru understands every disciple very well, but he may not talk about it, otherwise everybody will run away. So knowingly he has to deal with everybody as if he does not know their nature.

The disciple is described in the same verse quoted above, *tasmād gurum prapadyeta*, which means that he takes shelter of the guru, and *jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*, that he is *jijñāsā* (inquisitive) regarding the topmost subjects. Just from the intention of the disciple you can understand where he stands. If his or her purpose is not to inquire about *śreyas* (pure *bhakti*), then he is not qualified or sincere. Both, the guru and the disciple are therefore described in just one verse.

When will one be inquisitive about the object which can bestow the topmost welfare? Only when one has lost interest in material pleasure—in this or in future lives. Only then will one have inquisitiveness as to the Absolute Reality. The guru will know from that whether the disciple is actually *prapanna*, taking proper shelter, or not.

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QUESTION: Who is considered to be a *sādhū*?

ANSWER: *Sādhū* is a general word, meaning “one who is the best.” Therefore, there are different *sādhūs* according to different fields. In the material field, if a person is considered to be truthful or faithful to his word, then he is a *sādhū*. Similarly, there are *sādhūs* on the path of *yoga*, *jñāna*, and *karma*, and they all have different characteristics.

On the path of *bhakti*, the *sādhū* is known by the amount of *prīti* (love) he has for Bhagavān. *Prīti* is of course difficult to understand. *Prīti* comes from the root *prīñ*, which means to satisfy. So *prīti*, or love, means satisfying another person. In *bhakti*, it means satisfying Bhagavān or the guru. The more love one has, the better *sādhū* one is considered to be. There are three divisions of *sādhūs*: the best *sādhū* (*śreṣṭha*), the medium *sādhū* (*madhyama*), and the lower *sādhū* (*kaniṣṭha*). The topmost *sādhūs* on the path of *bhakti* are the *gopīs*, because they perform the topmost favorable service for Kṛṣṇa.

It is impossible to understand the mood of the *gopīs*, because they are not interested in receiving any independent pleasure.

*Prīti* means a kind of consciousness or pleasure which comes when you perform service for the object of your *prīti* and attend to that person's satisfaction. By seeing the object of your service happy, you feel happy or satisfied yourself. This is called *prīti*. The more *prīti* one has, the more one is considered a *sādhū*, and the *gopīs* are the highest *sādhū*s on the path of *bhakti*.

*Prīti* is a special type of feeling or consciousness in which one wants to see the object of one's *prīti* pleased by one's service. When you understand or feel that there is pleasure in the other person's heart because of your service, then that gives a kind of feeling in your own heart. That is called *prīti*.

*Prīti* always has an object. It is not without an object. There is always an intention, a feeling within you, that you want to please the person, and that gives you satisfaction. For that reason, you want to get close to that person, you want to associate with that person and serve him.

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**QUESTION:** We hear that with Kṛṣṇa we have different relationships, such as servant, friend, parent, etc. What is our relation to the guru?

**ANSWER:** Our relationship with the guru is only one: He is the teacher. Therefore, he is the master and controller. And the disciple is always the student and the one who is disciplined. That is why he is called disciple.

Kṛṣṇa says that He Himself takes the form of the guru to give education and to discipline society. Discipline is possible only when there is a relationship of master and servant. It cannot be in any other relationship. Therefore, the guru is not to be seen as an ordinary person and is always to be honored. For example, his name is not to be pronounced as you utter another's name in daily dealings. If you must speak this name, then it is to be spoken with great respect. You do not even cross the guru's shadow or touch his seat, his clothes, etc., with the lower part of your body. Previously, it was the rule that the disciple would never eat before the guru had taken his *prasāda*. Only when the guru had eaten, did the disciple eat his remnants. In my whole life, I never ate independently, as I always followed this principle. This is how the disciple is always



under the discipline of the guru, and there is no other possibility in this relationship.

*Bhakti* gives proper realization, renunciation, opulence, and freedom from material bondage. *Bhakti* is the only transcendental process that is superior to the material *guṇas*. Therefore, *bhakti* has the ability to provide the best realization and renunciation unlike other processes that can only provide material benefits.

Unfortunately, unqualified people have taken to this path of *bhakti* and have made a business out of it. They give whatever *mantra* in whatever relationship, and they even give *dīkṣā* by telephone. By using a microphone and loudspeaker, some gurus are giving *dīkṣā* and initiating hundreds of people during public lectures. This is all business and profit-driven and has nothing to do with spiritual life. These unqualified gurus have many disciples. Therefore, they propagate their process as being true, and the real process is neglected.

*Bhakti* has turned into a business because people themselves are not interested in it. If a person is interested, then they are committed to following a proper discipline, and only then will someone understand. If the disciple is not disciplined, he cannot understand, because he continues to act with his material ego. Therefore, *dīkṣā* means to surrender, and you no longer maintain your independent ego anymore. Your ego as a disciple should always be, "I am surrendered to my guru." When such a mood is there, your behavior also changes, and only then can one understand the reality.

*Bhakti* is the only real *dharma*, and only by *bhakti* does one obtain all good qualities. If one is not even disciplined, then what good qualities can one have? *Bhakti* is the only real process, and it brings welfare to a person. Even great personalities are searching for *bhakti*, but do not attain it, because no matter how great one is, one still has to go through the process of surrendering the ego.

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**QUESTION:** How can I build up or deepen my relationship with my *gurudeva*?

**ANSWER:** Since it is you who made the decision to take *dīkṣā* and not me, if I say something, then it will again turn into a material relation. It is not my intention to convince people to become my followers. It is the disciple who has to decide to surrender to the guru. In a way, it is an inappropriate question.

You have to understand *bhakti* properly, remove the doubts, have faith, and then the taste will come. Then you have to decide as to what can be said. If I say that you should come and live under my care, then I have to take care of you and instead of doing service to God, I will be serving you. In *Bhakti*, you make the decision to follow and then you will know how to relate with the guru. One accepts a guru by one's own decision. It is not that the guru says, "You become my disciple." *Śāstra* forbids that a guru preaches to make disciples.

**QUESTION:** It seems like one has to make this decision again and again.

**ANSWER:** No, the decision is made once. After that, you do not have to make a decision.

**QUESTION:** I mean the decision to become a proper devotee or disciple.

**ANSWER:** That is because of our problems. It is not necessary to make such a decision at every step. To begin with, you should have proper understanding and knowledge, and then there is no struggle. Even if you are seemingly weak, you will not have any problems. If the decision is strong to begin with, then where is the doubt? There is no question of leaving the guru. If one makes a decision with proper understanding, then there is no struggle.

**QUESTION:** If one has this mentality of surrendering, then does this evolve naturally?

**ANSWER:** That is what I am saying. There is no question of fear or leaving this path and going away. This does not happen. The idea of being on the wrong path never even occurs to a disciple. Nobody preached to Sanātana and Rūpa Gosvāmī to follow Mahāprabhu, yet they surrendered to Him fully and followed him for the rest of their lives.

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**QUESTION:** How can we understand the statement, "The intensity of the guru-disciple relationship determines the relationship which the disciple will have later on with Kṛṣṇa"?

**ANSWER:** The guru is *ātmā-devatām*. This means that the guru is very dear and is also worshipable like God. The disciple will get the same *bhāva* that the guru has, depending upon the *sampradāya* and *parivāra* (family) in which one has taken initiation. To attain this *bhāva*, one has to serve the guru sincerely and should not see him

as a material person. One should not think that he has a material body and so forth. One should worship the guru as *ātmā-devatām* and serve him free from any cheating propensity. If one is able to do that, then one will get the same *bhāva* that the guru has for Kṛṣṇa. For that, one has to treat the guru in the same manner as one would treat Kṛṣṇa.

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**QUESTION:** What if one does not attain perfection in this lifetime? What will happen in the next life, because the guru has gone to the spiritual world.

**ANSWER:** When one has taken *dīkṣā* properly, he is liberated. But when he does not follow his guru, then he hasn't understood the meaning of *dīkṣā*. Then what is the question of a relationship with the guru? However, when one keeps his promises of initiation, namely, to follow and serve his guru and Kṛṣṇa favorably, without any cheating, then there is no question of his taking birth again.

You should not see the guru as a mortal being but as Kṛṣṇa Himself. When you accept the guru, you should be truthful to that ideal. Then there is no question of another birth.

**QUESTION:** Why does Mahārāja not give us some solid instruction as to what we should do?

**ANSWER:** We have been talking about *rāgānugā-bhakti* and spontaneity. Service should come from you. Even if you want to do a little bit of service, do it without me asking for it. And when you begin doing service, then I will also give further instructions. So first, you have to take the initiative and do service. [Satyanarayana Dasa comments: "What he means is that if he gives you solid instruction, then you may not do it, and thus you will ultimately leave him. This has been his experience time and time again. As Mahārāja told one disciple, 'If I give you some instruction, you are not going to do it.'"]

**QUESTION:** Well, it depends on the instruction.

**ANSWER:** [Note: Mahārāja was not inclined to speak more on this. What follows, as an answer to this and the following question, is a comment by SND]. What Mahārāja is basically trying to say is, once you have taken *dīkṣā*, you have already surrendered to him. Now you should try to show that by cooperation, then instruction will come after that. This is how it will naturally develop. Otherwise, it will simply become like an order, and you follow and then you think, "I have followed it." That will give you pride.

QUESTION: Is that then mechanical?

ANSWER: Not only will you do the service mechanically, but you will also become proud. You would even say, "Mahārāja said that I will not do it, and I did it. Therefore I have proven that I am better." Moreover, after following the particular instructions, you will think that you have done your duty, and now you are free. The guru understands the mind perfectly and therefore he deals with you in this way.

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QUESTION: Is service to the guru only possible in his association—only if you are together with him?

ANSWER: Service can be done from anywhere, whether near or far, with the mind or the physical body. Service means acting favorably and cooperating.

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QUESTION: If someone has no positive feelings or appreciation for his own spiritual self, how can he understand the concept of loving Kṛṣṇa as one loves oneself?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* means to do service, and this service has to be done to the guru. One accepts a guru and then does *ānukūlya* (favorable service) to him and avoids that which is unfavorable or inconvenient for the guru. This is *bhakti*, and it is very simple. If one is interested in doing that, then it is not difficult at all.

This example of love for the guru is like the love one has for oneself, as it can give us an idea of the attachment we need to have for *bhakti*. Just as one is attached to some sense pleasure, a son, or any other possession, there is a similar attachment in *bhakti* also. Everybody has some experience of attachment somewhere. From that one can learn that a similar level of attachment is needed for the guru or Kṛṣṇa.

It is very simple and not complicated. If one can have such a mood towards the guru, then one will experience *bhakti*, and then one can deal with other beings in the same manner. The guru is the first person to be served with the consciousness of regarding him as something other than a material human being. *Bhakti* is universally applicable, and there is no discrimination on the basis of one's birth or gender, but one should be sincere about it and follow it sincerely.



First, one has to have this resolve in one's mind, and when the resolve is present in the mind, then it will manifest externally in one's actions. Otherwise, people take bath in Rādhā Kuṇḍa or do *parikramā*, and yet they have no experience of *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: What is the cause of our independence?

ANSWER: Ignorance, which turns one away from Bhagavān and from the guru.

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QUESTION: In the Gauḍīya Māṭha I always heard devotees talking about the "mercy of the guru." If the guru becomes angry, people would say, "this is mercy" and if he gives you a sweet, "this is mercy." Everything is, "you got the mercy, *prabhu*." What does it really mean to get the mercy of the guru?

ANSWER: All these types of statements are material. They are just to keep people together or influence them. When you render pleasing service to the guru and when he is pleased because you are sincere, then out of his pleasure, the mercy flows. It means that you have become further inspired and enthusiastic to do service. The sign of mercy is that you get pleasure in serving and have lost your interest in material pursuits and sense pleasures.

QUESTION: Then we develop more interest and desire to please?

ANSWER: Yes, that is mercy. Otherwise, such kinds of statements are uttered just to praise someone to get some work done or to get some favor. Then it is nothing more than a technique to boost the ego. By hearing such praise, the person becomes enthusiastic to serve.

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QUESTION: If one receives the seed of *rāgānugā-bhakti* from a qualified guru in one's life, how then does he proceed in his next life?

ANSWER: [Note: This is another embarrassing question, which has been asked repeatedly, and it is irritating to Mahārāja. So what follows is a comment by SND.] Mahārāja has answered this question already two, three times. There is no second birth if you have a genuine guru. Asking him this question again is insulting him, because that means that he is not qualified to deliver you. If

you have a genuine guru, and you are following him, why do you have to take another birth?

QUESTION: I am thinking of my own example of coming in contact with *Bhagavad Gītā* and reading it ...

ANSWER: Do not compare all this with *rāgānugā-bhakti*. If you are coming to *rāgānugā-bhakti* and have taken initiation, then there is no birth after that. You just have to follow the path. There are so many examples for that. Even *nāmābhāsa* gives liberation. If you take initiation from a genuine guru and surrender, then all your *karma* is finished. *Karma* acts when you identify yourself with the body. Once you have surrendered, your *karma* will not remain. God Himself has given the words, "If you surrender to Me, I will make you free from all sins" (*Gītā*.18.66). Now, if the disciple comes with a different motive, then nobody can help him. Even God cannot help him.

Only when it is time for one's material existence to come to an end, one is given a chance to take initiation from a genuine guru. Otherwise, why would God bring a person to a qualified guru? There is no need. Still, that does not mean that you can misuse that facility. So, if one has taken initiation with proper intention and has surrendered, then there is no question of any *karma* or of taking another birth. In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* it is described that all *karma*, including *kūṭa*, *bīja*, *prārābha*, and *aprārābha*, are destroyed by *bhakti*.

QUESTION: But if I die now, I think that I have to take another birth to complete my understanding and achieve perfection. I was wondering how then the seed from this life would be carried over?

ANSWER: These types of doubts come because of previous misconceptions. This misconception is always to think that, "If I do this much, then I will get that much." You think that if you take five steps, then you move ten feet. Now you are thinking, "I have taken one step, and I want to go ten feet, but if I die now, then what will happen to the other nine feet?" That calculation does not apply here.

QUESTION: My question is about the spiritual bank account.

ANSWER: If you try to analyze what caused you to come here, you cannot say that you did such and such activities, and therefore you came to this process. This is exactly what I am saying. These types of doubts come because we have an understanding that there

is a cause and an effect. When it is time for a person's cessation in the material world, then he gets *sat-saṅga*. No matter what your actions are, you came to this point only because of the causeless association of a devotee.

*Bhakti* is so simple that if you take *dikṣā* and after that do not commit offense, especially against the guru, then you do not have to do anything. If you do not commit an offense, meaning you do not act in a manner that is displeasing to the guru, and you do not go against *śāstra*, then you have achieved perfection. However, if you commit an offense, it implies that you do not want perfection. Apart from this, you do not have to do anything else by which to attain perfection. Yes, *bhakti* is simple.

**QUESTION:** How do we find out what is pleasurable to the guru? Will he give instructions, or will he reveal it? Should one simply inquire or is it by *sādhū-saṅga* that we can come to understand?

**ANSWER:** What is pleasing or displeasing is to be known by reciprocation. It is not simply a matter of the guru giving you orders, and you follow them.

When performing service to the cows, or any other animal, you can tell when they feel satisfied and when they do not. In the same way, by practical dealings or doing service with the intention of "I want to please," only then will you understand what is actually pleasing and not pleasing. This service has to be done by having faith in the words of God. The guru is pleased when you follow what God says, which is *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ / prātikūlyasya varjanam* (CC Madhya 22.100). This means to do what is pleasing and avoid what is not pleasing. In the beginning, you understand it by hearing, and then by reciprocating directly with the person. Then you will know yourself, as it will be revealed to you, whether this is pleasing or not. If you have the intention to please the guru, then you will know, and you will act accordingly.

We all are doing service to the cows, but when I go to the cows, they feel satisfied. They immediately reciprocate; they feel so happy, although I am not doing so much service as so many others are doing. So why do they feel satisfied with me and not with others? Although they do not have any language to express themselves, still feelings are there. By their behavior, we can understand how they are feeling. They feel satisfied by seeing me [Mahārāja]. In the same way, we can also understand what is favorable and not favorable to the guru by rendering service to him.

QUESTION: But is this always connected to the cows or directed to the guru? What if you are not personally with the guru?

ANSWER: It is not about being in physical proximity but about intimacy through sentiment. When you have the desire, then the reciprocation is there. There are people who are doing many more hours of service to the cows than I am, but the cows do not like them. So it is a matter of consciousness or internal feeling, mood or *bhāva*, which is more important. And *bhāva* you can have even when you are away.

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QUESTION: Is it an *aparādha* if one is trying to please Bhagavān, but out of lack of knowledge makes mistakes?

ANSWER: One has to learn from the guru how to behave in a favorable manner and you have to ask questions about everything, including even how to pay obeisances, because there are many rules even about that. If you ask everything, then one by one, I will explain them. And if one sincerely wants to follow, then one should learn all of this.

If one is not interested, then there is no offense involved, because then one is not related to God anyway. Fifty, sixty years ago, when people were sincere about devotion, they used to learn how to serve and how to behave, but now it is all a social farce. People have lost interest and they do not understand the importance of devotion, guru, or *śāstra*, nor do they put faith in them. Everything is ruined.

If one is interested, however, then one should inquire, learn it, and follow. Previously, people had a natural liking for instructions, and they followed them. There was discipline and strict control. Nobody could just do what they wanted to do, but at present all that is lost. Today people have no idea what it means to surrender to the guru, nor do they know the definition of what it means to be a guru, or even what it means to please the guru. How can I explain these things? They have no idea at all.

QUESTION: We talk about how different Vedic culture is from Western culture, which is part of our upbringing and nature. It is difficult for us to penetrate deeply into the subject of *guru-sevā*?

ANSWER: That is what I am saying. These things have to be learned.



**QUESTION:** That means that we can ask everything, even if it may appear to be a stupid question?

**ANSWER:** First, one must have strong faith on this path. At least one should ask oneself, "Do I really want to follow the spiritual path?" One should consider whether one wants to remain in this material world, taking birth again and again, or if one wants to get out of it.

Whatever you are attached to, whether it is the body, family, money, or wealth, know that all of these will be taken away at the time of death. Then you have to take birth again, and go through the miseries of life. One has to think about these points and decide whether one wants to bring an end to this or one wants to continue in the material world like this. This must be a very thorough deliberation. If one takes the decision that one wants to bring an end to one's material existence, then one becomes interested in philosophies (*śaḍ-darśanas*). Every philosophy is trying to give a solution to the problem of material existence, but this path of *uttama-bhakti* is the only one that gives a practical solution. All other paths are imaginary.

The other paths explain so many different types of ideas and processes of how to get rid of material existence. They also assist you to come to the level of *śraddhā*, and *bhakti* begins with *śraddhā*. Whereas other paths bring you to the point of liberation, *bhakti* begins with liberation. Here one takes shelter of the guru, and by taking shelter of the guru, one has to completely give up one's feeling that one is separate or independent. Although nobody is separate and nobody is independent, people believe that they are. If one truthfully follows this idea of surrender, then one is automatically liberated while living. Such a person will also become liberated after death.

That is why I repeatedly make the point that the guru is not to be treated as an ordinary human being or to be disrespected but is to be treated as God Himself. One should treat the guru the same way one would treat God if one met Him. This is the essence, and this is why I am stressing it. This is what people do not understand, or if they understand, they do not want to follow it. Without it, the path does not work. Although people are saying that they are doing *bhakti*, factually they are doing something social. Others have told them, "This is devotion, and this is to be done in this manner," so they keep on doing it.

*Bhakti* begins with *guru-pādāśraya*, taking shelter of the guru. This is the first step. The guru is the center. He is to be served without any personal motives or cheating propensities. When one does this, then one is on the right track. If one is interested, then one should deliberate on this concept and follow it.

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**QUESTION:** Once a disciple is situated in *satyatā* (truthfulness), and has accepted the vow of *satyatā*, how does he then serve the guru, in the absence of direct instructions?

**ANSWER:** A disciple means one who remains under the discipline of the guru. The word *śiṣya* means to follow *anuśāsana*, or discipline. If the disciple is truthful and sincere, then the guru will have a relationship with him. However, if the person is not sincere, then he is not going to follow the instruction of the guru and will commit further offenses. Because such a person is going to disobey Kṛṣṇa, just as in the second chapter of *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*kārpanya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ  
prcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ  
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me  
śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam*

"My nature being overpowered by the evil of weak heartedness and my mind confused about my duty, I ask You—please tell me which is best. I am Your disciple; please instruct me, who has taken refuge in You." (*Gītā* 2.7)

Although Arjuna said, "I am Your disciple, please instruct me," he refused to follow Kṛṣṇa. There is one type of disciple, who, if given any instruction, won't follow it. Therefore, it is better not to give instructions to these people. But if somebody is actually sincere and truthful, then naturally there will be instruction, and it will come just by reciprocating with the guru. There will be reciprocation and mutual understanding between guru and disciple. There will be oneness in their ideas.

If the disciple has his own agenda and a separatist nature, then what use is it to instruct such a disciple? The main thing is that if one is sincere about being a disciple, then the proper instruction will follow, but this is rare. It is important to understand this point, and only then, if one is sincere and serious about it, one should accept a guru. Otherwise, it is better not to have one.

**QUESTION:** Is the instruction given externally or is it given from the heart?

**ANSWER:** It is both. It is given externally, but it is inspired in the heart.

**QUESTION:** Does the guru feel when a disciple is praying to him and trying to perform service sincerely?

**ANSWER:** This depends on the sincerity of the disciple. Distance is no hindrance, as this is not a material thing. Generally, the feeling is even stronger when there is separation. Familiarity often breeds contempt. On account of the fact that Kṛṣṇa inspires the guru, if the disciple is sincere, the guru knows it.

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**QUESTION:** Could you explain the proper way in which we should pay our obeisances to you, Mahārāja?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is performed for the satisfaction of the person whom you are serving. The basic principle is that you have to perform service in such a manner that it is—at least—not displeasing. For that, one has to use one's own intelligent judgment. Service is not just doing some work and thinking, "I have done the work," but also seeing that it is not creating displeasure or disturbance.

In this age, people have no idea about *bhakti*. Moreover, this so-called preaching of *bhakti* is being done in such a manner that it would be better if it were not done. Then it would be easy to teach *bhakti*. Due to so many wrong concepts being preached, it has become difficult to explain about real *bhakti*.

There are many rules about paying obeisance. Do not pay obeisance when the person is doing service, bringing water for the deities, picking and bringing flowers to the temple room, or any circumstances that will obstruct his service. One has to use one's discretion, but these rules assist in guiding one.

Rules are there when we have no understanding. Ultimately, one has to understand the effect that one's service will have. *Bhakti* is not just some regimen but it is about understanding the purpose.

The essence or the basic *sūtra* is that it has to be done for the pleasure of guru or Kṛṣṇa, and any displeasing act must be avoided. If one is conscious about this, then it is possible to act favorably.

Otherwise, just doing some action mechanically, does not help. For instance, often people come and want to touch the feet of the guru, but they have no concern as to whether they are in a clean or unclean state. How does it please me or anybody else if the person is unclean? What pleasure does it give? That has to be understood.

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**QUESTION:** What should one do if inadvertently, one somehow displeases the guru?

**ANSWER:** You should be careful in future that you do not make the mistake again or act in such a way that would displease him. Just as when you work in a company, you act to satisfy your boss and you are careful not to do anything that will displease him; that very same principle applies here. *Sevā* means that you perform service, which is to the satisfaction of the guru. Just as in an office, you use your intelligence to make sure that you do not do anything to upset the boss, that same intelligence is used here. There is no difference between transcendental and material behavior. The same intelligence is applied in *bhakti*. Just as a good worker is very careful and attentive, one must also apply the same type of attentiveness in devotional life.

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**QUESTION:** Is the spiritual master subject to any reaction when the disciple commits an offense? In ISKCON many gurus are sick, and they say that it is due to the offenses of their disciples.

**ANSWER:** No, that is not true. The guru does not suffer any reaction due to an offense by the disciple. If someone commits an offense, then only that person will suffer the reaction.

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**QUESTION:** On one side, we want to develop love for the guru, but on the other side, there is respect. This seems to be like *mādhurya* and *aśvarya*—two contradictory things. How can these emotions of love and respect towards the guru come together?

**ANSWER:** The guru is *sākṣāt hari* (directly Bhagavān) as the *śāstra* says. The key point of *bhakti* is *dāśya bhāva* (servitorship), and the other *bhāvas* are also manifestations or further improvements only on *dāśya bhāva*. Whether it is *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, or *mādhurya*, ultimately there is only *dāśya*. That is the main thing.



The guru is to be treated as God. If you do not treat the guru as God, then you treat him as an ordinary person. If you do this, you are being offensive, and because of offenses, you will not follow anything that he says. That is why *śāstra* says that the guru should not be treated like an ordinary person. In the material world, people are already treating each other as human beings, but that does not mean that this is *mādhurya*. The *mādhurya* that *śāstra* is talking about is also *dāsyā*. So, first *dāsyā* has to be there. And if *dāsyā* is not there, then there is no *bhāva*—*aīśvarya* or *mādhurya*. It is all material.

With the guru it is not *vātsalya-bhāva*, *sakhyā-bhāva*, or *mādhurya-bhāva*. The *bhāva* is only *dāsyā-bhāva*. When *dāsyā bhāva* is there, only then can you have *mamatva* (“my”-ness, attachment) with him. When you have *mamatva* with him, then other things will follow. *Mamatva* will teach you how you have to reciprocate with him. But if *dāsyā* is not there, then there is nothing else. Therefore, the statement *sākṣād-dhari tvena samasta śāstrair*—the guru is directly Bhagvān.

There is a difference between happiness (*sukha*) and bliss (*ānanda*). Happiness means *ānukūlya-vedanīyam sukham* (“what is pleasurable to oneself is called happiness”), and *ānanda* is that feeling of satisfaction or happiness that comes by giving satisfaction to Kṛṣṇa or guru.

In the material world, we have our own *asmitā* (identification), which is the acquired ego that “I am so and so,” and all the happiness and all the other qualities are basically manifestations of that *asmitā* or “I.” This *asmitā*—the acquired ego—cannot be given up unless one accepts the guru as Kṛṣṇa or God. Otherwise, one will continue with one’s own *asmitā*. So if one does not accept the statement of *śāstra* that the guru should not be treated as an ordinary person, one will continue with one’s own *asmitā*. Consequently, whatever happiness or satisfaction is derived by such a person is because of one’s own *ānukūlya*, service to oneself.

**QUESTION:** During the different ages, is the connection between the guru and disciple ultimate, eternal, or are there also certain levels in each age?

**ANSWER:** The relationship of guru and disciple is present in other paths as well, but it is only for a limited duration. Just as in the *varṇāśrama* system, where the *brahmacārī* had to go and live in the *gurukula*, where he remained under the instruction of his guru, listened to his teachings, and worshiped him, but only for a limited

period. Once his education was complete, he became a householder, and then he did not have much of a relationship with the guru.

On the path of *bhakti*, however, the guru is the central point, because the guru is Kṛṣṇa. The type of relationship you develop with the guru is the type of relationship that you have with Kṛṣṇa. You have to be truthful and completely transparent in your dealings with him. Therefore, although the guru-disciple relation was there on the other paths as well, it was only for a limited purpose and for a limited goal. Here in *bhakti* it is an eternal relationship and a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa through the guru. So it is special. Just as *bhakti* is special, the guru-disciple relationship is also special.

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QUESTION: What is the relationship to the guru after his departure? What is our relationship in the spiritual world and in the next life?

ANSWER: The relationship is the same as now.

QUESTION: In this life also, after the guru departs, it is the same relationship that continues?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Also in the spiritual world?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: And in the next life also?

ANSWER: In the next life it is the same. On the path of *uttama-bhakti*, the guru is the worshipable. Bhagavān Himself exists in the form of the guru. The relationship that is here is also there in the next life. It exists both, in the practicing stage and the perfected stage. This is because this is the path of *ānugātya*, or following. Nothing is done independently, and this relation continues even in the perfected stage. One always remains under the guidance of the guru.

Therefore when Bhagavān is worshiped on the *simhāsana* (throne), the guru has his seat on His left side and is worshiped first, and only then Bhagavān is worshiped. The relationship is not different here or there [in the spiritual world]; it is an eternal relation. On this path, the guru is the key figure. One is never independent of the guru.

**QUESTION:** How does a disciple cope when his guru expires, especially a new disciple?

**ANSWER:** There are two possibilities:

1) If he did not get proper education from the guru and therefore is not qualified to execute devotion without guidance, he should approach somebody who belongs to the same group (*parivāra*), who has the same understanding of philosophy and the same frame of mind, and take instructions from him.

2) If he has understood the essence and is able to grasp the scriptural meaning, then there is no need for him to approach someone for help. He should just follow whatever instruction he has received from his guru, and that itself will be sufficient for him.

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**QUESTION:** If the guru disappears and the disciples are still sincerely attempting to surrender and follow the path of *nivṛtti mārga*, but they haven't reached the point of full surrender, does the guru have any responsibilities for those disciples?

**ANSWER:** If the disciple is sincere and has willingly accepted the guru, and if the guru leaves the body and the disciple follows the instructions of the guru, then that itself will give the disciple perfection in the guru's absence. That is because the guru is *Īśvara*, he is the Supreme God Himself; so he will inspire him and the disciple will attain the ultimate goal of life through that only. But if the disciple is not sincere, then nothing can be done about it.

This is the path of truthfulness, *sanmarga*, and if one is truthful, then he will attain success.

**QUESTION:** And does that spill over into another lifetime if the disciple is sincerely following the path of *nivṛtti*, but also leaves his body without having attained the stage of full surrender?

**ANSWER:** There is no more birth if one takes *dīkṣā* from a genuine guru, because one has no *karma*. When one comes to take *dīkṣā*, then his *karma* is burnt, just as fire burns the wood.

*bhavāpavargo bhramato yadā bhavej  
janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samāgamah  
sat-saṅgamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau  
parāvareṣe tvayi jāyate matiḥ*

“When the end of the cycle of birth and death for a wandering soul is near, then he gets the association of a devotee, O Śrī Acyuta, and when there is union with a devotee, then only one gets the mind to perform devotion to You, O Lord of all being, material or spiritual.” (Prayers of Mucukūṇḍa, SB 10.51.53)

When Bhagavān wants somebody's existence in the material world to come to an end, then He inspires him to come and meet a genuine guru and take *dīkṣā* from him.

This path of *bhakti* should be understood as being separate from other paths like *jñāna* or *yoga*, where one has to completely finish his *karma* by experiencing its result. Even if they become *jīvana-mukta*, they still have to exhaust their *karma*. But just a little contact with *bhakti* completely burns *karma*. So even if the guru leaves his body and the disciple is sincerely endeavoring, that itself will give him perfection, and there is no more birth for him, provided that he is sincere about it. If he is not sincere, then he again falls into the same trap.

For other people it is the Paramātmā, the Immanent Being, who is in charge, and they follow the law of *karma*. In *bhakti* the Paramātmā is the *iṣṭa-devatā*, which is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Just as the Paramātmā gives birth according to *karma*, Kṛṣṇa gives the position of an associate to His devotee. So Kṛṣṇa takes personal care. Therefore there is no rebirth for His devotees.

**QUESTION:** I met a nice young man on his way to see his guru who has 1.5 million disciples. If this young man had the right guru, then he would be on the right path.

**ANSWER:** No. Just as mango seeds only give rise to a mango tree and not a banana tree, and vice versa, in the same way, if this man would have met a proper guru, then he wouldn't have faith in him, because to begin with, he did not have *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. He has this kind of guru because of his own insincerity. He can only put faith in an insincere guru.

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**QUESTION:** I heard that everybody has to go through different gurus until one meets a *sat-guru*. Is this true, is there any *śāstrīya pramāṇa*?

**ANSWER:** There is no *śāstrīya pramāṇa* (scriptural evidence) of this. It is not that an *asat-guru* leads to a *sat-guru*.



**QUESTION:** Those devotees who came to ISKCON in the post-Prabhupāda period and had gurus who fell-down, had a mixed *karma*, because on one hand, they think in a Kṛṣṇa consciousness way but on the other hand, their gurus weren't bonafide. Is that just a quirk of *karma* that they had both good and bad repercussions?

**ANSWER:** The conditioned living entity has the natural tendency to fall for the wrong thing. Coming to the *sat-guru* is the mercy of Bhagavān. The living entity does not have its own intelligence to decide what is *sat* and *asat*. *Asat* people will never say that they are *asat*. In fact, they will proclaim very loudly that they are *sat*, because *asat* has the greatest fear from *sat*. So they have to make a very loud statement that they are the only *sat*, so that people will never think that they are *asat*.

A common person has a natural tendency for accepting the wrong thing. One also becomes influenced by the society, by what is popular. We tend to accept things that are followed by the majority, because we are social beings. We think that if many people are following it, then it must be right. So it is not that after one has accepted an *asat-guru* that this will lead him to a *sat-guru*. It is not because of good *karma* that one meets a *sat-guru*. Meeting a *sat-guru* is only by the grace of Bhagavān.

**QUESTION:** If it hadn't been for ISKCON, most people would never know anything about *sat* or *asat-gurus*, and even about Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism at all. Was that a part of Śrī Kṛṣṇa plan?

**ANSWER:** It is Kṛṣṇa's will that it happened like that.

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**QUESTION:** When one sees people coming to *darśanas* of Mahārāja or attending your (SND's) classes, and then they leave, and apparently it does not have any impact on their consciousness, can one conclude that this is because of offenses? What is the reason for this?

**ANSWER:** They do not come in a receptive mood or even in a neutral mood. They have a dislike for our teachings. Therefore, they do not accept them. You accept something only when you like it, and if you do not like it, then you do not accept it. When the heart is dirty because of sins, then the person cannot accept the right thing. He cannot accept a genuine guru or genuine *śāstra*. He cannot have a liking, taste, or trust in it because of the sins or offenses.

QUESTION: So then, for these people, is it just a waste of time, or will it have some reaction or result at a later stage?

ANSWER: If they have a dislike for it, then it is not possible that they will get any benefit. *Dveṣa* (dislike or hatred) never turns into liking, as these are two separate mentalities. It is not possible that they will give up this mentality.

## 50. Guru-pūjā—Worship of the Guru

QUESTION: How should we do *guru-pūjā*?

ANSWER: The guru contains two *tattvas* within himself:

- 1) He is *sākṣāt hari* (directly Bhagavān Himself).
- 2) He is a dear devotee of Bhagavān.

Before you worship the deity, you have to worship the guru. Without that, you should not do deity worship. After the worship of the guru, you ask for his permission to worship Kṛṣṇa. You worship Him in association with your guru, considering yourself an assistant to the guru. Think of it as the guru worshipping Bhagavān, and you are his assistant.

QUESTION: Can one offer *pañcopacāra* (sandalwood, flowers, incense, lamp, and fruit) to the guru?

ANSWER: It is all right to offer them. *Ānukūlya* (favorable service) has to be done first to the guru and then to Bhagavān. It is only on the path of *uttama-bhakti* that we see the guru as Bhagavān and as a devotee of Bhagavān. Other paths see him as Bhagavān only, and worship him independently.

QUESTION: How shall we offer food to the guru?

ANSWER: First you should offer *bhoga* to Bhagavān. When Bhagavān has accepted it, then you transfer the *prasāda* of Bhagavān to a separate plate of the guru and offer it to him. The guru eats from his own plate, not from the deity's plate.

QUESTION: Can one also offer *ācamana* to the guru?

ANSWER: Yes, but for that, too, you need a separate set of paraphernalia.

QUESTION: When one is making sandalwood for the *pūjā*, should one make two portions of it—one for the deity and the other for the guru?

ANSWER: Yes, you should make it separate, because you cannot offer Bhagavān the remnants of the guru. First you worship the guru with one portion, and then Bhagavān with His articles.

QUESTION: Is *guru-pūjā* done only once a day?

ANSWER: As many times as you worship Bhagavān, you do *guru-pūjā*.

QUESTION: What happens to the guru when one is putting Thākuraṇī to rest?

ANSWER: You put the guru to rest *manasi* (in the mind), after putting the deity to rest. The mind is the most important thing in worship. If some article is missing or you do not have much of it, then you can think of it. The mind is the center, the hub. Like in the material world, people are completely determined to earn money; similarly one has to be determined to be absorbed on the spiritual path. The idea of worship is to fix the mind on God. One should be attentive while doing *sevā*. If you are remembering the guru, then you will get the inspiration from Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: During *pūjā* usually we offer to the guru *arghyam*, *madhuparkam*, and *naivedyam*. Should we also do this on a day when there is fasting till noon, like today?

ANSWER: You offer it. Worship is done regularly.

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QUESTION: How should the guru be worshiped? First should we worship the guru and then the deity? And how is it done with offering *prasāda*? How should we offer *prasāda*?

ANSWER: Guru's paraphernalia should be separate from the paraphernalia of the deities. The guru is only accepting the articles offered to the deities, except when you offer him *dhūpa* (incense), *dīpa* (lamp), etc.

In *uttama-bhakti*, or *rāgānugā-bhakti*, the procedure for the worship of the guru is given by the Gosvāmīs. Before you worship the deity, you worship the guru. For example, if you want to offer flowers and sandalwood to the guru, you first take the flowers and sandalwood for the deities, then set aside a portion of it for the worship of the guru and with that portion you start with your guru worship. The guru is getting a portion of Kṛṣṇa's articles, but the paraphernalia should be separate.

One should always have the mood of *ānugatya* (follower), and not think oneself as independent. One should always be in this mood, doing *sevā* in his association, even if one is on the *siddha* stage.

*Anartha-nivṛtti* will never happen if one does not give up the independent mentality of a *bahirmukha* (non-devotion). Therefore, one should always follow the guru, serve him, and worship Bhagavān in the mood of a servant of the guru.

There are two kinds of *upāsanā*:

1) *Svārasikī* means serving Kṛṣṇa in His *līlā*. Here Kṛṣṇa is moving like a current of a river. In the *līlā* the devotee is serving Kṛṣṇa according to the needs of the *līlā*, which can also include *mantramayī*.

2) *Mantramayī* means serving the deity who is in one place, not moving. Here Kṛṣṇa is like a lake, stable in one place. That is the chance to offer Him *dhūpa*, *dīpa*, etc.

The goal behind *pūjā* is not the activity of worship. The aim is to develop a relationship with Bhagavān, and *pūjā* is a means by which one can become *sā mukhya*, or favorably inclined. The path to attain this goal is to follow the guru. Otherwise, one becomes even more *bahirmukha* (non-devotional) than before, because one is becoming proud of his *pūjā*.

You should study yourself carefully: Ask yourself these questions: Do I like my guru? Do I want to serve him? Do I just want to advance without serving the guru? Do I criticize him? If people have this mood, then the more *sā dhanā* they perform, the more they develop independent thoughts. It often happens that after taking *dīkṣā*, one becomes proud and independent in a more polished way. You have to see if you are progressing in the direction of serving the guru, or are you keeping your separatist and independent mentality. The most important thing is to have the right mood, not the exact *vidhi* (process). The guru cannot be given up at any time!



**QUESTION:** If there is an emergency situation, should one pray to the guru for proper intelligence?

**ANSWER:** You should remember the guru, pray to him, and take him as an ideal example. Remembrance will keep you on track. Otherwise, you will be influenced by lust, etc.

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**QUESTION:** How should we pray and offer *pranāma* to the guru?

**ANSWER:** The Vedic style is that the person who is paying obeisances first invokes the guru, takes his own name ("I am so and so and I am offering you my obeisances"), and then he bows down. Bowing down means to remember the qualities of the person to whom you are offering obeisances and see yourself and your position in comparison to his position, and in this way become free from ego and pride.

Offering obeisances means to accept the superior position of the guru and to know one's inferior position in comparison to him. It is not just a physical act, but a feeling or sentiment. The meaning of obeisance is, basically, to be conscious of his exalted position.

## 51. Happiness

**QUESTION:** If a person has *laukika-śraddhā* (material faith) but still experiences some taste during performing devotional service, is this just in the *guṇas*?

**ANSWER:** The feeling of happiness, which a person with *laukika-śraddhā* derives, is not transcendental but material, because this *śraddhā* is a characteristic of intelligence, which, according to Sāṅkhya, is a material element. Happiness means something that is favorable to the individual person. People have some concepts, set certain rules, and follow them, and by that they feel some kind of satisfaction. This is not related to transcendentalism, because transcendental happiness is not coming from the *guṇas* of nature.

**QUESTION:** Sometimes, this happiness is on the level of ego. You realize, to some extent, what makes you happy, even if it does not stay for very long, but still you are aware that this is the feeling to be attained. Does the happiness that comes from the awareness of "I am a servant" come from a transcendental platform or is it derived from the level of intelligence?

ANSWER: The happiness in relation to the feeling of "I am a servant" is transcendental. In fact, this feeling comes because you have done service, and this is pleasing to Bhagavān or guru. If this gives you satisfaction, then it is not material but spiritual happiness. But if such a feeling of happiness is independent of the guru, then it is material.

QUESTION: If such a feeling is not material, then is it the internal potency reaching the soul to some extent, even though one may not have attained the platform of *śraddhā* or feel all the time as a servant of Bhagavān? Can this be experienced before coming to this stage?

ANSWER: There is a basic difference between *uttama-bhakti* and other types of *bhakti*, which are mixed. Such an experience or feeling of happiness that you are describing can happen and is possible in other types of *bhakti* but not in *uttama-bhakti*. If one is following another type of *bhakti*, like *jñāna-miśra*-, *yoga-miśra*-, or *karma-miśra-bhakti*, then one can attain some realization, and it is possible to have such an experience of some kind of happiness. It can also be beyond the *guṇas*, but it is not completely pure, as in *uttama-bhakti*.

That kind of pure happiness, which comes from *uttama-bhakti*, is not possible without transcendental *śraddhā*. In *uttama-bhakti* it is possible only if one has transcendental *śraddhā* and is following a genuine guru. Then only can one gain such an experience but not without it.

QUESTION: Is *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* [devotion mixed with the path of *jñāna*] something that is performed typically or something that is performed because someone may be intending to do *uttama-bhakti*?

ANSWER: If one intends to perform *uttama-bhakti*, then he has to follow the process of *uttama-bhakti*. *Uttama-bhakti* means following the guru, and it is not done independently. In other types of *bhakti*, you can do things independently. Independently means not exactly following the guru, as in *uttama-bhakti*. You follow certain rules and regulations, you may even take *dīkṣā*, but you are not fully surrendered. Those kinds of *bhakti* can be done like that, and you can experience some kind of happiness.

However, in *uttama-bhakti* it is completely *ānugatya*, following, because it is *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*, completely free from any other motive. *Bhakti* is *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*, which means it is only with the intention of pleasing Kṛṣṇa, which also means pleasing the guru.

So the experience of *uttama-bhakti* is not the same as on other paths, although they may look similar. They are *sajātiya*—they look similar because they belong to the same class, but they are not the same. You will realize this only after some time, when you have made more progress on this path. Then you will see the difference. In the beginning, it may look as though one person has a similar feeling as another person; but it is not the same.

Many times people say, "How can you say I am not performing *bhakti* and I do not have *śraddhā*? Because I have this experience, and I like it." That is possible. But the experience of *uttama-bhakti* is different, just as in the material world, people's experience of happiness is different. Even if you sincerely perform service to your father, mother, or somebody else, that also gives you satisfaction, what to speak of doing spiritual *sādhana* in relation to *bhakti*. But this happiness that one gets by doing service to one's mother or father, is not the same as service to guru or Kṛṣṇa. Although for a common man it may look the same. There is a difference.

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**QUESTION:** When *ānanda* is the happiness that comes from pleasing the guru and Kṛṣṇa and *sukha* is one's own pleasure, then why is happiness of Brahman-realization called *brahāmānanda* and not *brahmasukha*? Because there is no service to guru and Kṛṣṇa when one is Brahman realized?

**ANSWER:** You have not fully understood the definition I have given of *ānanda*. *Sukha* (happiness) and *duḥkha* (misery) are related to one's own self [self here means "body"]. What is favorable is *sukha* and what is not favorable is *duḥkha*. The ultimate misery is death, because we are attached to things we possess, and if somebody snatches them away, then we feel miserable. At the time of death, everything is taken away. It is just as if you have lived in a house for a long time and then you are kicked out of that house. All your possessions are also taken away at the same time, and you are left feeling miserable. Therefore, death is the greatest misery. *Pravṛtti-mārga* is related with *sukha* and *duḥkha*, being connected to this body and material things.

Then there is *nivṛtti-mārga*, in which there are three divisions of relationship—Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. There, the relation is not with the body but with one's own self:

1) Those people who do not want to surrender to God go for Brahman-realization. They are not very intelligent because they

have to work so hard just to merge into Brahman and lose their identity.

2) Those who go beyond that are the yogīs, who try to merge into Paramātmā.

3) And then there are those who want to attain Bhagavān. He is attainable through *bhakti*. People who come to *bhakti* are generally looking for liberation. Beyond Bhagavān is Svayaṁ Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa, who is attained by *vraja-bhakti*, in which there is only *prīti*. The *ullāsa* (satisfaction), which comes by doing favorable service to the object of your *prīti*, is called *ānanda*. This feeling of satisfaction is actually *prīti* (love).

In Sanskrit these are all synonyms of happiness: *ānanda*, *prīti*, and *sukha*. Although they are all synonyms of happiness, they have subtle differences in their characteristics. So *prīti* is also a synonym of *ānanda*. This definition of happiness (*ānanda*) that I gave is applicable only in the case of *prīti*.

There are many manifestations of Bhagavān and the supreme manifestation is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is manifest in Dvārakā, Mathurā, and Vraja. Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is the topmost. A devotee in Vraja is working completely for the pleasure of Bhagavān, and then only does he feel satisfied. In Dvārakā and Mathurā it is fifty-fifty, for there is also a desire for one's own pleasure. Each manifestation is Bhagavān, but only Vraja-Kṛṣṇa is called Svayaṁ Bhagavān.

There is a distinction between *bhakti* in Vraja and *bhakti* in other places. In Vraja it is *uttama-bhakti*, or completely pure, as there is no tinge of any self-motivation or selfish desires. There are so many words that are used for *ānanda*, but the word *prīti* has its separate characteristic. This kind of happiness comes only by giving happiness to the object of your *prīti*, and not otherwise. It is in that sense that it is called *ānanda*, and not in any other meaning. That distinction has been made. Just as there is Bhagavān and Svayaṁ Bhagavān, similarly there is *ānanda* in *brahmānanda* and *ānanda* in *prīti*. *Ānanda* is a synonym of *prīti*. The word *ānanda* used in *brahmānanda* does not mean the same as the word *prīti* ("giving pleasure to the object of love").

## 52. Health—Disease

QUESTION: How far should one tolerate bodily distress, because there are two ways to see it: One way is that the body belongs to



Kṛṣṇa, so let me take care of it and also sleep well and not get distressed; and the other way is that I should tolerate whatever comes, heat and cold, knowing that I am not this body. Sometimes this can be very tricky, when there is nobody there to do the service, so you are forced to do it, even if you are not well. What should we do?

ANSWER: Both are important. The body is the basis for everything, so you should definitely not neglect the body. When the body is sick, you cannot do anything. It also influences your mind. Yet, at the same time, service is also important. So you have to take care of the body and also render service. Otherwise, the mind will always find an excuse not to engage in service.

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QUESTION: To what extent should a devotee take care of his body? There are so many things, medicines, treatments, yoga, healthy lifestyle, etc.

ANSWER: The body has to be protected and maintained. And Bhagavān has given sufficient knowledge and material for that. If somebody is sick, he has to take medicine to keep the body fit. If an animal attacks, you have to counteract that. If there is poverty, you also have to remove that. Otherwise, how will one perform service?

*Bhakti* means that there is no other desire, *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*. The self is different from the body. For the maintenance and healing of the body, Kṛṣṇa has given us knowledge in *Āyurveda*, *tantra*, and economics. One should use this knowledge to maintain the body, but for the purpose of serving Bhagavān. Do not become too absorbed in the body. Look into your mind and determine if you are taking care of the body, so you can serve Kṛṣṇa, or if you are taking pleasure in your body.

Some people say, "Do not take medicine." But this is all *jñāna-mārga* or *yoga-mārga*. *Jñānis* or *yogis* are meant to renounce, because their path is one of renunciation. Our path is not like that. We make use of everything and serve Bhagavān. We do not engage in unnecessary renunciation. That would be an obstacle to our *bhakti*.

If a disease is present, then you should take medicine. If some other obstacle arises, then you need to use your intelligence and counteract that. You have intelligence. Use it to for keeping everything in balance.

**QUESTION:** What if taking care of the body becomes an unnecessary burden? For example, if someone has cancer, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), or some other incurable disease, then what do we do in such an instance? Should one just depend on Kṛṣṇa or still go on trying to cure the disease?

**ANSWER:** One should endeavor to get release from that disease. Even if one is unsuccessful, still one should try.

**QUESTION:** There is no such idea as submitting oneself to Bhagavān and becoming passive?

**ANSWER:** One should not do that. This is in *jñāna-mārga*, as I have already explained.

**QUESTION:** I am asking this in reference to our paralyzed *param-gurudeva*.

**ANSWER:** He refused to perform many *anuṣṭhāna* to cure his disease. However, he was taking medicine. When you perform *anuṣṭhāna*, your mind becomes diverted as you are praying for something else. However, when you take medication, you are not praying to be healed, you are taking care on the material level. You still continue with your service, mental remembrance. You are not begging for something else.

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**QUESTION:** Yesterday it was explained that a devotee in *uttama-bhakti* does not get affected when he is diseased, hungry, or in any other condition. If we feel affected by sickness, pain, depression, or mental disturbance, does that mean that we haven't surrendered?

**ANSWER:** If the body is sick, it affects the devotee's mind, because he has to work with both his mind and body. It is not that he has some other instruments. When you are healthy, then you feel very inspired to work, but if the health is not good, then it is an obstacle. Therefore devotees should make an effort to maintain good health. They should not neglect their health, thinking they are transcendental. Mind and body are related. If the body becomes sick, the mind also feels sick, and you cannot work with the same enthusiasm.

To do service, therefore, one must be free from sickness and poverty, which are obstacles. One has to solve these problems. Otherwise, how will one do service? If you have a responsibility, then you have to take care of it. Being in the material world, these

two problems will come to the devotee: He falls sick, or he has no money. So, the devotee makes arrangements to solve these obstacles.

QUESTION: So is it wrong to think, "If I am feeling sick, that means that I haven't surrendered yet?"

ANSWER: This is what I am saying. When the body falls sick, the mind is affected. The Pāṇḍavas, for example, were also in difficulty and were affected when they lost their kingdom. Yet, they neither gave up their determination nor would they leave the path, although they experienced problems. It is natural that they felt disturbed, because they wanted to do service and they weren't able to do it because of a lack of means.

## 53. Humility

QUESTION: Does the third verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* mean that first one should be humble and tolerant and then one can always chant, or by chanting always, one can become humble and tolerant? Which one comes first?

ANSWER: Neither. It isn't that when you are humble, you will chant, or that when you chant, then you will become humble. It will not happen either way, as you have probably experienced. If you practice humility, then that is only fake and hypocritical, because you will keep yourself attached to your body and bodily relations—your birth qualifications. It is just like a shopkeeper, who practices certain things in order to do well in his business. If you want to buy something, they will talk to you nicely, but when their job is done, the same people can fight with you. When they have something to gain from you, they can act humbly. That is not humility. It's just a show, hypocrisy. People also behave like this when they come here, bow down, and ask, "What service can I do?" This is not humility, because they have their own separatist motives. So, humility and tolerance cannot go together. Whenever the other person, to whom you are bowing down, says something that goes against your motive or will, that will become an obstacle for you in attaining your goal. Then you become angry, but you will keep the envious feeling concealed while bowing down.

In the same way, if you continue chanting, that is not going to give rise to humility, because you have a hidden motive. Therefore, chanting is done only after you have surrendered, and this is the true meaning of chanting the *nāma* or *mantra*. Humility will come only if

you have taken shelter of a guru and surrendered everything to him. Then you have the proper platform to be humble. If you have taken initiation in the proper sense, then you do not have a separatist mentality, and you do not associate anymore with the material body or things related to it. This is the meaning of surrender. When you do that, then humility and tolerance will become natural, and in that state, it is possible to follow what is stated in this verse. Otherwise, everything is just a show, like a play or *drama*, and it will never work.

So the process is to accept a guru and surrender. Surrender does not mean that you forget who you are. You know your qualifications, but you are not conceited. When you have surrendered, your pride is that you are now a servant of Bhagavān. This will give you tolerance and humility, because now you are not influenced by your material accumulations or material qualifications.

If you see a person who is taller than you, then you will realize that you are short in front of him. In the same way, if you meet a person who has better qualities and better qualifications, then you will realize your position, and you will have natural humility. In the same way, if you understand Bhagavān, who is the personification of the *mantra*, then you will understand His qualities. Only then will real humility manifest. If you have a guru, and you are surrendered to him, and you understand the guru is not just an ordinary person or human being but a personification of God, then naturally there will be humility. Then only it is possible to chant.

*Uttama-bhakti* is a practical *dharma*. It is not some kind of imagination that, "I go on chanting, and then I will become humble one day." This is never going to happen, and instead you will become more proud. You will think, "Now I am chanting, and these other people are just nonsense because they are not chanting. They are in *māyā*." So, instead of becoming humble, you will become proud. Although you will make an exterior show of humility, you will become harsher inside. *Bhakti* is not something that is just theoretical or imaginative. It is not that, "Now I have become humble because I am chanting 64 rounds."

For example, if someone is taller than you—as already explained—then you may say anything, but you realize that he is taller than you. You have to accept that fact. In the same way, if you accept the guru, then you immediately adore the guru, because you know that the guru is God. He is more qualified than you in every respect. So, if you accept this fact, then humility is natural. Otherwise, it will never happen, because you cannot give up your association with



your material body and things related to it, like birth, education, and qualification. You will always identify with these and remain proud of them.

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**QUESTION:** Can you elaborate on the *śloka*, *tṛṇād api su-nīcena*, meaning that we should chant with a humble state of mind? What conceptions should we have while chanting? What is humility?

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Adi 17.31* says:

*tṛṇād api su-nīcena  
taror iva sahiṣṇunā  
amāninā māna-dena  
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

“One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor, yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the Holy Name of Bhagavān.”

**ANSWER:** If one wants to worship Bhagavān, then one has to acquire the same nature as Bhagavān. The basic principle is *devam bhūtvā devam yajet*—if you want to worship God or *deva*, then you also have to become divine. Bhagavān is not different from His Name:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś  
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ  
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto  
bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

(CC Madhya 17.133)

Unlike in the material world, where the object and the sound are different, in the case of Bhagavān, the name and the person are non-different from each other and there is absolute oneness between the two. So if you want to chant, which means that you want to give honor to Bhagavān by taking His name, then it has to be done in the right frame of mind. You have to acquire a similar nature as Bhagavān, and that means humility. It basically signifies that one has to give up one's material ego and material pride thinking, “I exist independently.” As long as someone has this mentality, his chanting will only have an adverse effect, because he is only going to work to attain or improve his separate existence.

This whole idea that one is lower than the blade of grass signifies that one is not independent of Bhagavān. Rather, one is His part and His servant, and therefore, one is tolerant.

This example of the tree is given to show how a tree is very tolerant because it does welfare for everyone. Even if somebody wants to cut down the tree, still it does not complain. It keeps standing and does not demand anything. A devotee is also like a tree. He does not depend on anything material but he depends on Bhagavān and continues to perform his service. This is the significance of this verse.

## 54. Independence, No

**QUESTION:** When I am in the West, I have to make so many decisions in my daily life. How am I to understand that I should not act independently? Is it that I am always aware of the connection with guru and Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** First of all, you should understand that there is no such thing as independence. When we use this word independence, we understand this to mean frivolousness. It is an illusion to think that somebody is really independent, because everybody is dependent on others. Nobody can live independently in this world.

As for making day-to-day decisions, you will need some basic guidelines. For example, if you have to eat, you have to offer the food. You do not eat unoffered food. This is the principle, and you are not independent of this. If there are some major decisions to be made, then you consult the guru.

The idea is that you should not think or feel that you are independent. If you feel that you are independent, then you are in trouble. You always consider that "I am a disciple of my guru, and I am his follower." When you have this consciousness, then you will naturally not make decisions independently, because your decisions will be guided by your goal—your motive.

A disciple should always remain under the discipline of the guru. This is the difference between a disciple and other people. Otherwise, if the disciple forgets his identity, he will be like other people.

**QUESTION:** Mahārāja is speaking a lot about the independence of disciples, and that it should be given up. Could he explain more about it?

**ANSWER:** Being independent means remaining frivolous. The path of Mahāprabhu is a path of following. You have to follow Kṛṣṇa and guru, because nobody is independent. In the material world, you are dependent on the three *guṇas*, and in *bhakti-mārga* you are dependent on guru and Kṛṣṇa. For instance, if you take a job, you become the servant of your employer, who in turn pays you. A good servant works and makes an effort to satisfy his employer or boss and gets paid for it. If you are not good in your job, then you will be fired.

Similarly, in *uttama-bhakti* you should act for the pleasure and satisfaction of Bhagavān, without expecting anything in return. The complete development of a living entity's personality will come only if one serves with *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam* (BRS 1.1.11). For that, you have to give up all independent concepts and serve guru and Kṛṣṇa without any desire (*anyābhilāṣitā*) and also serve favorably (*ānukūlyena*).

In *uttama-bhakti* there is no independence anymore, whereas in *vaidhī-bhakti* there is still some independence. Here in *uttama-bhakti* you have to give up your own independent concepts and thinking yourself to be the enjoyer. You serve guru and Kṛṣṇa favorably without any motive and with the mood that I am the servant of my guru: *dāsadāsa-anudāsa* (the servant of the servant).

\*

**QUESTION:** How can we give up our independent nature?

**ANSWER:** Accepting or rejecting is the function of the mind. So one has to understand *bhakti*, remove the doubts, and then make a firm resolve that this is what I want to follow, and I want to give up everything which is contrary to *bhakti*. This has to be done by oneself. Nobody else can do anything about it. If you want to follow something, you have to act accordingly.

Once you have understood that this is good for you, this is beneficial, and by doing this, you will achieve your purpose, then you naturally accept it and give up everything that is an obstacle. The same thing is applicable in *bhakti*. You hear and understand about *bhakti*, and then you do as Kṛṣṇa has said at the end of *Bhagavad*

Gītā: "Deliberate on it and then do as you like." Deliberating means to understand whether it is good for you or not good for you. After that, you make your decision.

## 55. Inspiration

QUESTION: Yesterday in class we heard that if we are receiving inspiration from the Supersoul, we also have to check it with the guru?

ANSWER: If you do not study and do not ask, then you are just following your mind.

QUESTION: So we should ask you anyway?

ANSWER: Yes.

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QUESTION: When one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa in the form of the guru at the time of *dīkṣā* and one is sincere about following the *nivṛtti-mārga*, does that strengthen our voice of intelligence, of analyzing ourselves, our *anarthas*, and pretenses?

ANSWER: It does strengthen and becomes fortified, because the heart becomes cleansed and the disciple is able to see things more clearly. This is called *sphūrti* (inspiration).

## 56. Jñāna

QUESTION: Sometimes the process of *jñāna* is used as a synonym for mental speculation. Is that correct?

ANSWER: It is a mistranslation.

## 57. Karma

QUESTION: Is the fire that burns *karma* the fire of knowledge?

ANSWER: Knowledge or *bhakti*. For a devotee there is no difference between knowledge and *bhakti*, because this knowledge



is related to devotion. The fire of knowledge is for others, like the *jñānīs*.

QUESTION: Is the verse 4.37 of *Bhagavad Gītā*, that *jñāna* burns *karma* to ashes, meant for the *jñānīs*?

*yathaidhāmsi samiddho 'gnir  
bhasma-sāt kurute 'rjuna  
jñānāgniḥ sarva-karmāṇi  
bhasma-sāt kurute tathā*

“O Arjuna, just as the blazing fire turns the fuel to ashes, similarly the fire of knowledge turns all actions to ashes.” (*Gītā* 4.37)

ANSWER: Yes. There is a difference between a person in *jñāna-mārga* and a person in *bhakti-mārga*. A devotee is completely free from *karma* because he is surrendered to Bhagavān. There is no basis for him to get *karma*.

A *jñānī* who sincerely thinks that he is Brahman does not get any more *karma*, because with this type of attitude he will obviously be renounced. He will not perform any *kāmya-karma*, *nitya-karma*, or *naimittika-karma* (action with material desire, regular duty, or incidental duty). So he will not get any more *karma*, but whatever *karma* the *jñānī* has performed in the past, that has to be exhausted. Only when he has experienced the result of all his *karma*, shall he become liberated. He may have to take more births, because it is possible that he may not finish all his *karma* in that particular life. That is the difference. Only in *bhakti*, the *karma* is completely burned, just as a very strong fire burns the wood completely. This is described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (First Wave of the Eastern Division).

In *jñāna-mārga*, they do not surrender but remain independent. And because they remain independent, they cannot get rid of their *karma*. Due to their knowledge they will not perform further *karma*, but whatever they have done, they will have to face the consequences that flow from that.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam says that even those who are *mukta* (those who realize they are not the body) will also fall down if they disrespect Bhagavān. Falling down means that they will again develop material desires. But in devotion, this does not happen. If it sometimes appears, then it is only for people who are not strong. Otherwise, in *bhakti-mārga*, there is no such thing as going back to the material world. It is not said anywhere in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam that a devotee falls down.

However, for the *jñānīs* it is said they fall down: *ye'nye aravindākṣa vimuktamāninaḥ* (SB 11.2.32). They can come down.

**QUESTION:** Those *jñānīs* whose *karma* is exhausted, can they still develop material desires?

**ANSWER:** Yes, because they are independent. Only *bhakti* gives the proper solution in the form of surrender. Once you have surrendered, then there is no possibility of desiring anything anymore, because desires come only when you are independent. If you are not independent, where will the desires come from? And if you do have desires, it means that you are still independent.

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**QUESTION:** On one side it is said that the Holy Name frees one from one's *karma*, but on the other side, *param-gurudeva* said that his disease was the result of his past deeds. How should we understand this?

**ANSWER:** *Karma* is related with one's ego, and when the ego is surrendered to *Īśvara*, then how will *karma* remain? *Karma* has to hang on the ego, because when you have the ego that you are the doer, then you are also the enjoyer. Then you also have to get the results of your actions. But when you completely surrender to *Īśvara*, then there is no *karma* involved. Whether *karma* is past, present, or future, it is washed away when one practices *bhakti*.

In other processes, however, whatever action a person performs, he must undergo the result of that action. Without undergoing the result, one can never become free from *karma*, even if hundred *kalpas* have passed. Sooner or later one has to undergo the reactions of one's *karma*.

Yet, if a devotee says, "I am suffering because of my *karma*," then that is not a fact. It is how others talk, so the devotee also talks like this. The devotee knows that whatever is happening is *Īśvara's* arrangement.

**QUESTION:** Does this also refer to *prārabdha-karma*?

**ANSWER:** *Brahmā-saṁhitā* says that a devotee's *karma* is completely destroyed, whether it is *prārabdha* or *aprārabdha*, whether past, present, or future.

\*

**QUESTION:** For somebody who is surrendered to guru and Kṛṣṇa, will his time of death happen by *karma* or by Kṛṣṇa's will?

**ANSWER:** A devotee is not under the control of *karma*. Therefore his death is not coming on account of any *karma*, as he is under the direct control of Kṛṣṇa. However, that is true only when he is actually a surrendered devotee, and not just in name only. Otherwise, to the extent he is surrendered, only to that extent he will be free from *karma*. When he has fully surrendered, completely taking shelter of the guru and not maintaining any separatist ideas, then he will not come under the influence of any *karma*, whether it is past, present, or future. He is directly under the protection of Bhagavān.

Otherwise, if one takes *dikṣā* and engages in *nāma-aparādha*, then that will cause material desires. Instead of liking devotional service, one will like material things. All this chanting of the name, etc., if it is not giving its proper result, it will give another reaction. This reaction will come in the form of material attachment. So basically, offenses will bring the *karma* back in an augmented form.

The example of Jaya and Vijaya is there for us to understand that offenses can make one interested in material things.

One who is free from *karma*, has no material interest. *Karma* has to have some basis to exist. Just like when you have a shirt that you want to hang, there has to be some peg to hang it on. If there is no peg, where will you hang it? So *karma* is also like that. It hangs on one's ego. When one surrenders, he no longer has a separate ego; rather he has the ego, "I am the servant of my guru and Kṛṣṇa." Then where will the *karma* hang? There is no basis for *karma* to remain anymore. Therefore, one is free.

**QUESTION:** What if somebody is not fully surrendered but is on the way?

**ANSWER:** Up to the extent one is surrendered, to that level one is free from *karma*. This is mentioned in BRS 1.1.23:

*aprāradbha-phalaṁ pāpaṁ kūṭaṁ bījaṁ phalonmukhaṁ  
krameṇaiva praliyante viṣṇu-bhakti-ratātmanām*

"The *aprāradbha*-, *kūṭa*-, *bīja*- and *prāradbha*-*karmas* of those who are engaged in *bhakti* to Viṣṇu are destroyed in this order."

*Karma* is divided in four categories: *aprāradbha*, *prāradbha*, *kūṭa*, and *bīja*. It is destroyed in that order. So *aprāradbha* is the first one

to go. Then *prārabdha*, *kūṭa*, and *bīja* take a longer time. If one is fully surrendered, then everything is finished. *Karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājām*: "Once one is engaged in devotion, then one's *karma* is destroyed" (*Brahmā-saṁhitā* 5.54).

*Bhakti* is action. It is not just a change of dress, like putting on *tilaka*, *kañṭhī-mālā*, and wearing a *dhoti*. It is a change in oneself. If that change is there, one will naturally know it. It is not that you can perform some *yajña*, or sacrifice, and then you will go to heaven. *Bhakti* is that which you experience directly. It is a religion of direct perception, and there is no cheating involved. But if one is cheating, then there is no benefit.

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QUESTION: Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Svāmī defines *karma* in two ways: One is simply an action and the other is *adrṣṭa*, unmanifest. What exactly is this *adrṣṭa*?

ANSWER: *Adrṣṭa* is the unmanifest *karma*. It is what you have performed in the past, and that which will accrue in some result later on. That is called *adrṣṭa*, which literally means invisible.

QUESTION: Does *adrṣṭa* mean only the resulting fruit or does it define *karma* (action)?

ANSWER: Yes, one is *karma*, and the other the fruit of *karma*. All the actions that are done in the past are called *adrṣṭa*, and from that there are different divisions made, like *kūṭa*, *bīja*, *phalonmukha*. *Adrṣṭa* is a sum of your action performed. The portion out of that which makes the body is *prārabdha*.

The principle of *karma* is that it cannot be exhausted without undergoing the suffering or pleasure of the result of its reaction (of *karma* or one's actions). Only *bhakti* has the power to nullify it. Otherwise, in other processes, like *jñāna* or *yoga*, people have to undergo the result of their past *karma*. Sometimes there is a description that *yogīs* expand their bodies through *kāyavyūha*, so that they can quickly diminish the accumulated *adrṣṭa*. But in *bhakti*, *karma* is completely destroyed, all the way to its very roots, which are *vāsanās* (desires).

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QUESTION: Why did a major earthquake happen in Gujarat? Was it because the people there are considered to be the most



generous and pious? Why do they suffer, whereas impious people are enjoying?

ANSWER: Misery comes because of sins or because of disobeying the orders of God. Therefore, whatever reaction they received, they must have done something to cause it. You also get the reaction if you are in bad association. If you associate with people who are atheists or against God or devotion, then their association also gives problems. [See also: association]

Consider the story of the sage Māṇḍavya. Some thieves, who were being chased by the police, came to Māṇḍavya's hermitage and hid themselves there. When the police came, the thieves ran away, leaving the bounty behind. The police suspected the sage and arrested him. While the sage had not stolen the goods, thieves had hid in his hermitage and therefore he received the undesirable reaction. Some people are sinful themselves and some people may be supporting or associating with those who are sinful. So they too will acquire the reaction. There must have been something of that kind with the people in Gujarat.

QUESTION: Is there something like accumulated *karma*? Since everybody died at the same time, they must have had the same *karma*?

ANSWER: There is also common *karma*, just as in case of the terrible heat in Vrindavan during summer. The heat is for everybody. So everybody must have some *karma* to suffer from this heat.

If there are so many people together getting the same reaction, it means they must have something in common. They are in a particular place at a particular time because of some common *karma*.

## 58. Kīrtana

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the *adhivāsa kīrtana*, which was done in the evening before the disappearance day of *param-guru jī*?

ANSWER: *Adhivāsa kīrtana* is the way to invite Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu along with His associates. This is the custom, which our *sampradāya* follows. Before *kīrtana*, Mahāprabhu along with His associates are invited with great honor and respect. When Śrī Caitanya comes with His associates, then *kīrtana* is performed

according to His mood. He is in the mood of Vraja. One enters into Vraja through His mood. Then *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* is performed. That is the process and the significance of *adhivāsa kīrtana*. It is done on the evening before the *kīrtana* is performed.

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**QUESTION:** In which mood should one engage in *kīrtana*? Should we be in the mood of a follower of the eternal associates?

**ANSWER:** Human beings have material bodies, and they have material attachments. Their natural mood is that they want to do service to their bodies and senses, as they are guided by the three *guṇas*. Under these circumstances, it is very difficult for them to understand *bhakti*, what to speak of entering into it. *Bhakti* is just the opposite to their present state of consciousness, as *bhakti* means doing service for Bhagavān. *Vraja-bhakti* especially is the most difficult to understand. Even Brahmā and Goddess Lakṣmī were not able to understand it. To realize it, one has to become completely free from any other motive.

It is only Caitanya Mahāprabhu who came and explained the process of devotion. In all other *avatāras*, God comes and does not explain *uttama-bhakti*. He just kills the demons or the chiefs of the demons. But Mahāprabhu came to give education to humanity. His greatest gift is *bhakti*.

*Kīrtana* is one of the main processes of devotion. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is known as the father of the *saṅkīrtana* movement (*saṅkīrtana-pitā*). *Saṅkīrtana adhvāsa* means inviting Śrī Caitanya, because it is only through His mercy that one can enter into Vraja; otherwise, it is not possible. Nobody else has any idea of doing causeless service to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Śrī Caitanya is invited along with His associates so that He can perform *kīrtana*, in which there is chanting of the Names. This is an invocation of Kṛṣṇa. Through the chanting, He becomes absorbed in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. One enters into Vraja following Mahāprabhu's mood. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is there and His associates are there, and by performing *kīrtana*, they become fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa. Their absorption is only in Kṛṣṇa because they are absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. This is the significance of doing this *anuṣṭhāna* (special process) for doing *adhivāsa* and *kīrtana* for 24 hours. It has to be done with this mood. Then only, it is possible that one gets the benefit of doing *kīrtana*, and that is called worship.

**QUESTION:** Is this *anuṣṭhāna* or *adhivāsa kīrtana* always done?

ANSWER: Only if one is doing *kīrtana* before some festival, *adhivāsa kīrtana* is done. Otherwise, you do not have to do it. Only when you do this *anuṣṭhāna*, which means a specific process or a spiritual process for advancement, you do *adhivāsa kīrtana*. Otherwise, if you do *kīrtana* every day, then there is no need to do *adhivāsa kīrtana*.

QUESTION: In what mood should one then do normal *kīrtana*?

ANSWER: It has to be done in the same mood. That means you are with guru and Śrī Caitanya, and they are engaged in *kīrtana*, and so are you, because without Śrī Caitanya, it is impossible to enter into Vraja. You have to follow their mood and not do *kīrtana* independently.

Some people say that they can approach Kṛṣṇa directly. In India, many people think that Śrī Caitanya is not God, and they say, "O, he is Bengali, and how can a Bengali be Bhagavān?" Yet, the fact is that it is not possible to attain Kṛṣṇa without Mahāprabhu, because Kṛṣṇa Himself came as Caitanya Mahāprabhu to give Himself.

QUESTION: Should one then offer prayers to guru and Pañcatattva before one starts doing *mahā-mantra-kīrtana*?

ANSWER: Yes, it should be done.

QUESTION: Is the same principle applicable in *japa* also?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Śrī Caitanya?

ANSWER: *Saṅkīrtana* means many people singing loudly together with musical instruments [in glorification]. If there are not many, then one can also sing alone if one has a good voice. This is called *saṅkīrtana*.

QUESTION: Are there other meaning also in this?

ANSWER: No.



QUESTION: Is the chanting in *kīrtana* more powerful than *japa*?

ANSWER: In *kīrtana* there is natural absorption of the mind, because your whole personality is involved in it—mind, body, and senses. People are naturally attracted to music. Therefore, there is a natural liking for proper *kīrtana*.

In *japa*, however, you have to control your senses, and only when you are in the *sattva-guṇa*, you will be able to do it properly, because it is *smaraṇam* (remembrance), which is done with the mind. *Kīrtana* is naturally attractive. There are other people, and you chant loudly; so the speech, mind, and body get involved. Thus it is easier to fix your mind through *kīrtana*. The defects associated with chanting, such as falling asleep, the wandering of the mind, and lack of interest, are not there in *kīrtana*. You do not fall asleep while doing *kīrtana*, but in chanting *japa*, every day you experience laziness, sleep, the flickering of the mind, and lack of interest.

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QUESTION: What is the significance of *kīrtana* in *bhakti-mārga*?

ANSWER: *Kīrtana* is a very good process for fixing the mind on Kṛṣṇa. The mind is the cause for material existence as well as an instrument to get on the spiritual path.

Since *kīrtana* involves singing with musical instruments, it naturally concentrates the mind along with all other senses. If you have to chant mentally or hear, then the mind flickers and runs here and there, but in *kīrtana* it becomes absorbed very easily; therefore, it has its importance.

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QUESTION: I was reading the songs of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, and it seems that many of these songs are depicting some intimate *līlā* or service in this *līlā*. Does one need some special qualification for chanting or hearing these songs?

ANSWER: One can sing them, if one has a liking for them, but one has to be careful. If the song is about intimate pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and one is not free from sex desire and has the ego of being male or female, then, ultimately, one will end up thinking about sex. That should not happen. And if that happens, then it will become the cause of one's downfall. In such circumstances, one should rather sing other songs, which speak of humility or songs which are prayers to Bhagavān. There are so many of them.



**QUESTION:** There are devotees who sing the *mahā-mantra* in two parts. The problem is that the *mridanga-mantras*, which are in Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's and Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's songs, do not fit if you split up the *mahā-mantra*. Is it also offensive to the *mahā-mantra* to split it up?

**ANSWER:** You should sing the full *mahā-mantra*. Do not split it up. We should follow the previous *ācāryas* and they sang the full *mahā-mantra*. The complete meaning of the *mahā-mantra* comes only when one chants the complete *mantra*.

## 59. Kṛṣṇa

**QUESTION:** In the academic study of religion, religion is understood chronologically and historically. You have the Vedic period, then the Itihāsic period, which is considered to be later. They base their conclusions on language, because the Vedic texts have an archaic type of language that has a subjunctive or a number of infinitive forms that do not occur in the classical language. So you have linguistic differences as well as cultural differences. The *Rg Vedic Brāhmaṇas* are full of sacrificial information as to how to perform *yajña*, and they say nothing about reincarnation, temple worship, or vegetarianism. All these things are in the Purāṇic texts. In the Vedic texts, in the strict sense, the *Vedas*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*, and *Upaniṣads*, there is no mention of Kṛṣṇa. If the Kṛṣṇa traditions claim that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme God, how do they explain the fact that in this chronological earlier Vedic period, Kṛṣṇa is not mentioned at all, and even Viṣṇu is considered a minor deity?

**ANSWER:**

*ya te dhāmany uśmasi gamadhyai  
yatra gāvo bhuri-śṛṅgā ayāsaḥ  
atrāha tad urugāyasya viṣṇo  
paramaṁ padam avabhāti bhūri*

(Yajur-Veda 6.3)

[Mahārāja quotes a couple of verses from the *Rg-Veda* and other *Vedas*, which are talking about Viṣṇu and also about the cows. He also quotes a verse from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, which speaks about Kṛṣṇa as *kṛṣṇa devaki-putra*.]

QUESTION: He [Mahārāja] is saying that it is true that there are a couple of verses, but what about Kṛṣṇa? The first time He is mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. [Here the questioner is making an argument that Kṛṣṇa is mentioned for the first time in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which is a much later composition than the Vedas. Thus, Kṛṣṇa is a later development.]

ANSWER: No, the Vedas are also using the word *viṣṇu*, and there is talk of cows there.

QUESTION: There is one verse in the entire realm of the four Vedas, and in all the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas there is this one verse of Viṣṇu and His abode ...?

ANSWER: In this way, in the *Bhāgavatam* there is only one fourth of a śloka that Kṛṣṇa is Svayaṁ Bhagavān.

QUESTION: Yet, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, it is the first time that you hear about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it is problematic because it says that His guru is Angirā, which is not the case in the *Bhāgavatam*. So it is probably not even the same Kṛṣṇa. This is the first mention we have of Kṛṣṇa. Scholars conclude from this that Kṛṣṇa is a later deity, which arises in the post-Vedic age and surfaces in the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which are considered to be later still. To say that Kṛṣṇa has always been the Supreme God in Vedic culture would not be acceptable from a scholarly perspective.

ANSWER: The basic principle is that after creation, God wants to give knowledge to human beings. As described in the *Bhāgavatam*, He created the human form so that the living entity could attain knowledge about God, because only in the human form one can understand Bhagavān. He has given this ability to the human form.

So He gives knowledge Himself, because no one else has knowledge about Him. This knowledge comes gradually, because knowledge depends on the inquisitiveness of the people. In other words, He reveals the knowledge according to the appetite of people.

Suppose there is a scholar who has completed his graduate or postgraduate degree in all six systems of philosophies, but students come to him only to study grammar. He will teach them only grammar, and there is no question of talking about philosophy or other things. Because he only teaches grammar, people may think that all he knows is grammar, but that is not the fact, because he knows many additional things. Since he does not have any qualified students, he does not speak about many other topics. His students

are neither interested in hearing philosophy nor do they have the ability to grasp it. So the scholar speaks on grammar alone.

Similarly, God comes and manifests His potency or His energies and gives knowledge according to the *parikara* (people). When there is no demand for His *Svayaṁ Bhagavān* feature, or His original personality as Kṛṣṇa, He does not manifest it.

Suppose you go to a shop to buy potatoes. The shop may be a big store that sells everything, but the shopkeeper will not show you everything he has in stock, because you are only interested in potatoes. Most people may be just interested in potatoes. He may also have gems, but he will not offer them to you. Why should he waste his time with that? He knows that you are not interested in them. If, however, some rare person comes and is interested in that, then he will show him gems. From this, the people whose interest is only in potatoes may conclude that he only sells potatoes. Even some neutral person, ten years later, may conclude so by analyzing his sales.

Similarly, in the so-called “Vedic Yuga,” which people say existed first historically, most people were *sakāma* (only interested in material gains); therefore, there was no need for *Svayaṁ Bhagavān* worship. So, only *devatā* worship, such as that of *Varuṇa*, was revealed to them. That is predominantly found in the Vedas. In the *Upaniṣadic yuga*, people were more mature and were interested in liberation. So the *Upaniṣads* talk about Brahman or, at the most, about *Paramātmā*. This is a gradual trend.

Finally, *bhakti* was revealed. All of this took thousands of years of evolution. During this time, many philosophies developed, including Yoga or *Sāṅkhya*. Each of these philosophies is interested in how to free a person from misery. These processes do not talk of God so much. For example, *Yoga Sutra* speaks of *prāṇava*—*tasya vācaka prāṇava*. *Prāṇava*, or *Om*, is the name of *Īśvara*. Meditation should be done on *Īśvara*—*Īśvara pranidhānād vā*. What is *Īśvara*? Who is *sarvajña* (the knower of everything)? Yet, in the *sutras* not much is said about who He is, because people were not interested in that.

So, ultimately the *Bhāgavatam* says:

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas  
tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam  
brahmeti paramātmēti  
bhagavān iti śabdyate*

“The knowers of that Absolute Reality call this non-dual consciousness by the names of Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān” (SB 1.2.11)

The Absolute Reality is one, and it is known by three names: Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. It means that even the word Paramātmā is also the same as Bhagavān. It is not that Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān are three different things. Even when the word *paramātmā* is used, it also refers to Bhagavān, but because the person is only interested in a limited aspect, nothing much is said about Bhagavān. From that one can conclude that Bhagavān does not exist. Otherwise, just as in Sāṅkhya, there is the philosophy of *sat-kāryavāda*. *Sat-kāryavāda* means, “Nothing comes from nothing.” As they say in the computer world, “Garbage in, garbage out” or whatever you get out has to do with what you put in. So only when something is already there, it can manifest. As such, if Kṛṣṇa does not exist at all in the Vedic or Upaniṣadic Yuga, then how does He suddenly manifest in the Purāṇas? By the principle of *sat-kāryavāda* (everything has a cause), He has to be there already.

Another point is that He was not prominent because there was no demand for Him. So in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa is established, and that means He also existed before, but the knowledge is given according to the qualification and the inquisitiveness of the people. Moreover, Kṛṣṇa appears only once in a day of Brahma, which contains 1000 cycles of four yugas. So the Vedas, which are eternal, hardly refer to Him because of His very rare appearance in the material world. The Purāṇas were compiled at the end of Dvāpara-yuga, so they talk of Kṛṣṇa.

**QUESTION:** It is said that the Vedic age is the most primitive age, in which you have *karma-kāṇḍa*; in the Upaniṣadic age—the later age—you have *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, and in the Purāṇic age, there is *bhakti*, which is the most sophisticated. How does that fit with the idea that actually the Satya-yuga is supposed to be the most advanced age, Dvāpara-yuga the less advanced, and Kaliyuga the most degenerated age? The process has been switched around; it is supposed to be declining ...

**ANSWER:** There is always a balance in nature. When there is some advantage, there is also some disadvantage, and vice versa. In Satya-yuga there was so much Vedic knowledge available, but the cream was missing. You have to work very hard to get a little essence. In Kaliyuga, when people are degraded, the cream is easily available.



There is degradation from the point of people's character, but there is also evolution in knowledge. *Avatāras* come because of the gradual evolution in essential knowledge or the cream. Now, the highest is being revealed in this age, which is the lowest of all ages.

QUESTION: There is evolution even in the *avatāras*?

ANSWER: There is evolution in knowledge; it is not that the *avatāras* are evolving.

QUESTION: Yet, how does that fit with the idea that in the Satya-yuga, the *yuga-dharma* was meditation, in the Tretā-yuga, it was *yajñas*, which would fit with the Vedic period, in the Dvāpara-yuga, deity worship, and in Kaliyuga, *harināma*? If we say that there is an evolution from *karma-kāṇḍa* to *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, as if there is an age where *karma-kāṇḍa* is prominent—the Vedic age—and an age where *jñāna-kāṇḍa* is prominent—the Upaniṣadic age—and an age where *bhakti* is prominent—the *bhakti* age—how does it fit with the other scheme that in Satya-yuga there is meditation, etc.?

ANSWER: The whole thing is like this: If you want to start from Satya-yuga, then why not go even further back? You will find it to be part of a cycle. If you start from *karma-kāṇḍa*, then start from Tretā-yuga, and then you will have *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, then *bhakti*.

QUESTION: Yet, *jñāna*-age, for example, wouldn't correspond to any *yuga-dharma*, because there is no *yuga-dharma* like that. The Vedic age would fit with Treta, perhaps, but where would you fit *jñāna-kāṇḍa*?

ANSWER: In Yoga.

QUESTION: But that is before?

ANSWER: It is also degradation. That is what I am saying: It is a cycle, and there is evolution and devolution in that. Kṛṣṇa makes the statement *traigunya-viśayā vedā* (Gītā 2.45), meaning that the Vedas are mainly dealing with *triguṇas*, that is *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, and that is what the majority of people want. Therefore, this path of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* is voluminous, and the other paths like *jñāna* or *upāsana* are very limited. So whichever part becomes prominent depends on the requirements of the people.

For example, consider that now *Bhāgavatam* has been written and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known. So how many people really know Kṛṣṇa as Kṛṣṇa and not as Viṣṇu? Even if they worship Kṛṣṇa, they do

not know Kṛṣṇa as Svayaṁ Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa is known as Svayaṁ Bhagavān only in the Gaudīya *saṁpradāya*, and not in the other *saṁpradāyas*. Even among Gaudīyas, how many really know the meaning of Kṛṣṇa as Svayaṁ Bhagavān?

Viṣṇu is also a name of Kṛṣṇa. Even in the description of the *rāsa-līlā*, which is supposed to be the life of the *Bhāgavatam*, the word Viṣṇu is used for Kṛṣṇa.

*vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ  
śraddhānvito 'nuśṇuyād atha varṇayed yah  
bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati pratilabhya kāmam  
hrd-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ*

“Anyone who faithfully hears or describes Bhagavān’s playful affairs with the young *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana will attain the Lord’s pure devotional service. Thus, he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart.” (SB 10.33.39)

The word *viṣṇu* is used in this verse. But whatever meaning one makes of it depends on the person’s requirement. When a person becomes free not only from *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* but also from *mokṣa*, then the need for Kṛṣṇa comes. This is *uttama-bhakti*: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo* (SB 1.1.2). All the *kaitava* (cheating) is dropped, including the desire for *mokṣa*. It is then that Kṛṣṇa’s manifestation occurs. Therefore, earlier there was no need for Kṛṣṇa. He was there, but He did not manifest Himself to the people of this planet.

We are worshipping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but take the *Bhāgavatam* and try to establish Rādhā from that. One can say that there is actually no Rādhā. However, if you study the *Bhāgavatam*, it is ultimately establishing the mood of Rādhārāṇī, and there is nothing else in it.

Thus, the conclusion is that there does not necessarily have to be a linear evolution from *karma-kāṇḍa* to *jñāna-kāṇḍa* to *upāśanā-kāṇḍa*. Knowledge is revealed according to the need and caliber of people.

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**QUESTION:** What is the proof that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and not Śrī Viṣṇu is the Supreme Lord? Nobody in Mahārāṣṭra/Gujarat will believe that Kṛṣṇa is the origin even of Viṣṇu.

ANSWER: Jīva Gosvāmī wrote a whole book on this topic, and Mahārāja has translated and commented on it in Hindi, *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha*. You should read it.

QUESTION: What is the proof that Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself?

ANSWER: There is no direct proof in the scriptures. There are His biographies, for example, the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, but the Gujaratis and the Vallabha *sampradāya* people do not accept that. The real proof is Mahāprabhu's deeds. Otherwise, what is the use of some scriptural statement if one does not see the effects of His actions? If you analyze and study Mahāprabhu's activities carefully, then you will know that He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. This is the only real proof.

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QUESTION: What destination do people attain who want to attain Kṛṣṇa without Mahāprabhu?

ANSWER: They are not really devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For them Kṛṣṇa is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. So really, they worship Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa and not Kṛṣṇa as Svayaṁ Bhagavān. It is a fact that nobody really knows who Śrī Kṛṣṇa is unless one reads the Gaudīya literature. Not many people know that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayaṁ Bhagavān. Even the earlier commentators of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* have not given this information. They give a different meaning even to the verse *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayaṁ* (SB 1.3.28). They worship Kṛṣṇa of Dvārakā, because in Vraja He is neither a *brāhmaṇa* nor a *kṣatriya* but a cowherd boy. But they worship Him as a *kṣatriya*, which He is in Dvārakā. So they cannot enter into Vraja.

In South India, even if they worship the Gopāla deity, they give Him a *brāhmaṇa* thread, which is done in Dvārakā, because they will not worship somebody who is not wearing a thread.

People also worship Kṛṣṇa for their own maintenance, making money and business out of His service, because the worship of Kṛṣṇa gives so much facility from the point of view of pastimes, *līlās*, etc. Enacting Kṛṣṇa *līlās*, singing, dancing, etc., are all part of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, but not of Dvārakā-Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā did not dance. So this *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa gives them the facility to attract people. Especially now, as *bhakti* has become popular, everybody talks about Kṛṣṇa, no matter whether he is a *jñānī*, *yogī*, or *karmī*.

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**QUESTION:** In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says that He appears when *dharma* (righteousness) is declining. Nowadays, there is not much *dharma* left, so it seems that Kṛṣṇa would have to appear more often to establish *dharma* again, because it is stated that He appears only once during a day of Brahma (which is 1000 cycles of the four *yugas*).

**ANSWER:** Kṛṣṇa has His own will, and He is not bound by any law, that He must come. He has given a general principle about His appearance in this world. Yet, this does not mean that whenever *dharma* is weak, He has to come immediately. He comes whenever He likes.

Sometimes, Kṛṣṇa increases the *guṇa* of *sattva*, sometimes the *guṇa* of *rajas* and sometimes the *guṇa* of *tamas*. Whenever the lower *guṇas* are prominent, He comes Himself.

Also, when He says that He comes when *dharma* is declining, this does not mean that He has to come in His personal form. He has other *avatāras* who also come. Now He has come in the form of His *sankīrtana*.

**QUESTION:** What does it mean that He increases the *guṇa* of *tamas*?

**ANSWER:** He sometimes increases *tamo-guṇa*. Then people become ignorant and demoniac. He has different energies, and these energies keep on changing by His will. Accordingly, people become religious or *asuric*. When He wants to enjoy His pastimes, then He appears and establishes religion, and when He goes away, then other *guṇas* become prominent.

**QUESTION:** When *tamo-guṇa* takes over, is this by the will of Bhagavān?

**ANSWER:** Ultimately, it is by His will.

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**QUESTION:** What is the meaning that Kṛṣṇa is *advyañjāna vastu*?

**ANSWER:** One who is not influenced by *māyā* is *advyañjāna*, because *dvaya* or *dvitīya* is *māyā*.

Kṛṣṇa has *hlādinī*, *sandhinī*, and *samvit*—three potencies. *Prakṛti* causes material miseries and material happiness. It does not exist



in these three potencies. It consists of the three *guṇas*. It has no influence on Kṛṣṇa, although it belongs to Him. All energies belong to Kṛṣṇa. They cannot exist without Him, but they cannot overpower Him. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is *advyañāna*, or the non-dual, conscious reality.

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QUESTION: We heard in *Bhagavat Sandarbha* that the *kaustubha* jewel is the representation of the living entities and the *śrīvatsa* sign is the manifestation of Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune. Does Kṛṣṇa wear the *kaustuba* jewel and the *śrīvatsa* sign?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Is the *śrīvatsa* sign the resting place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī?

ANSWER: Yes, Rādhārāṇī is the original Lakṣmī.

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QUESTION: On what occasions does Kṛṣṇa use His different flutes?

ANSWER: Kṛṣṇa plays His different flutes according to His liking. It is not that He is following a certain rule that says, "Under this circumstance I will play this flute and under that circumstance I will play that flute."

QUESTION: And what flute does He use on earth?

ANSWER: Whatever He uses there, He uses here. There is no difference between the places there or here. It is the same place. He comes with His own abode.

## 60. Leaving Spiritual Life

QUESTION: We see that people become attracted to spiritual life, but then they go away. How does this happen and how can we avoid it?

ANSWER: If you do not like it, you will go away.

QUESTION: Is that again the point of liking?

ANSWER: Obviously. If you like it, you are here, if you do not like it tomorrow, then you will not come. What's the big deal with that? Suppose you go and talk to somebody and you tell him, "I go to the *goṣālā* every day to do cow service." Then he says to you that these people are just misusing you, they are trying to exploit you. Then you may think, "Yes, this makes sense, why should I waste my time for nothing? I can work and make money. What do I gain by serving the cows?" And then you will go away.

Actually, we do not have *saṁskāras* of *bhakti*. All our *saṁskāras* are from past material enjoyment. Mahārāja was explaining that sometimes we hear from people that *bhakti* is this and *bhakti* is that, so by listening to them, we will have some understanding about *bhakti*. You will think that maybe *bhakti* is like this, but truthfully speaking, people do not understand *bhakti* at all. So they start doing something which is not different from what they were doing before. You can see people doing all sorts of things in the name of *bhakti*, and this is all part of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* under the cover of *bhakti*. This happens because they do not know what *bhakti* is. How can you do something if you do not even understand it? Their coming and going has no meaning. People come with some understanding or with some motive, and when this understanding is challenged or their motive is unsatisfied, they leave.

Mahārāja always says, "After taking *dīkṣā*, the disciple wants the guru to follow him," and this is a fact. "Following the disciple" does not really mean that the disciple orders the guru and he follows, but rather, after *dīkṣā*, the disciple thinks that the guru should match the disciple's expectations of a guru.

The disciple has expectations of how a "real" guru should act, and if his guru does not deliver those expectations, he gives up on the guru. Therefore, instead of understanding the guru, he wants the guru to follow his concepts. Everybody has some concept of guru or *sādhū*. For example, they may believe that a guru or *sādhū* is somebody who gets up early in the morning or somebody who chants 64 rounds. If you carry these concepts with you even after taking *dīkṣā* and you realize after some time that the guru is not living up to your concepts, then you will naturally think, "Actually, I like that other guru better," and you will go to another guru.

Unless you understand what *bhakti* really means and you sincerely endeavor to follow it, you will not continue. Basically, *bhakti* is a matter of *śraddhā*. If that is missing, then this coming and going is not a big thing.

QUESTION: Is this because when one has *śraddhā*, one never loses it?

ANSWER: Yes. It will grow; there is only one way for it.

## 61. Liberation

QUESTION: A *jīvana-mukta* is a person who is advanced in spiritual life. He does not identify with his body, but still he is in this body of three material *guṇas*, so how does he experience the pain and happiness of the body?

ANSWER: You have to understand the mentality of a person who is liberated in his body, a devotee. For that you have to first understand the meaning of bondage, because liberation and bondage are interrelated. One is only understood in relation to the other. Bondage is not real. It is not in the true sense that the living entity is bound, because bondage is not in his *svarūpa*. It is only by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. Therefore it is external.

The bodily identification exists because of ignorance, and ignorance means that which is not real, because it is based on improper knowledge. Ignorance is dispelled when one takes to devotion. Devotion begins with *śraddhā*, or having trust (faith) in the words of *śāstra* and guru. Then by engaging in *guru-sevā*, which is like a sword that cuts the knot of bondage, one realizes that the bondage was not real. This is called *jīvana-mukti*.

A liberated person understands his/her mind. At this stage the mind does not run towards sense objects. One can study his mind and know its leanings, whether one is on the *sat-mārga* or *asat-mārga*, i.e., on the path of pleasing the senses or the path dedicated to the service of God. A *jīvana-mukta* is one who is not interested in sense pleasure because he has *śraddhā*, is devoted to the guru, and does service. He is not interested in sense pleasure. This is why he does not identify with the body, even though he still remains in his body. Liberation does not mean that he does not have any feelings, but rather liberation and bondage are a matter of the consciousness.

Being liberated does not mean that you are possessed of mystical qualities and do not feel hunger, pain, heat, or cold. Such things may be spoken of in other paths, but not in the path of *bhakti*. On the paths of *jñāna-mārga* and *yoga-mārga*, they say many mystical things which are false. If you read *jñāna-mārga* or *yoga-mārga*, they tell you that if you become liberated, then you will not feel pain.

This is false. Liberation is achieved only in *uttama-bhakti* and not on any other path. As long as you remain in the body, you will feel pain. Liberation means the desire to serve God without any desire for sense pleasure (now or in the future).

The path of *jñāna* is in the material *guṇas*, as *jñāna* comes from *sattva-guṇa*. So how do you become liberated by *jñāna* when you are still in the *guṇas* of material nature? The processes followed by *jñānīs* and *yogīs* are trying to get rid of *māyā*. They are very much afraid of her. *Māyā* is *avidyā*, *asmitā* *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa*—meaning ignorance, identification with the body, intense desire, hatred, and fear of death. They try to get rid of these by cultivating knowledge. But knowledge is also in *sattva-guṇa*. They want to remove *avidyā* with the help of *vidyā*. The *vidyā* that they talk of is also material. They are trying to clean dirt with dirt, but that is a futile exercise. Therefore, they keep on persevering. All the examples given in the *Bhāgavatam*, such as the stories about Saubhari Muni and the Kumāras, are to show that no one can get rid of *māyā* by one's own endeavor.

However, in *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa says one is liberated right from the beginning:

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī  
mama māyā duratyayā  
mām eva ye prapadyante  
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

“This divine energy of Mine, *māyā*, constituted of three *guṇas*, is indeed very difficult to surmount. Those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this *māyā*.” (Gītā 7.14)

If one has *śraddhā*, then he is not independent anymore, and therefore he becomes liberated. That is what it means when it is said that in *bhakti* one becomes liberated from the very beginning. Do not confuse this liberation, however, to mean that now you can fly in the air or not feel any pain. The meaning of liberation is that one is not independent, that his consciousness is fixed on God.

All of these other mystical meanings are concoctions. In *bhakti*, right from the beginning, the person who follows and surrenders properly is liberated, because he is no longer subject to the cause of bondage, *avidyā*. He does not have *rāga* or *dveṣa* based on material duality, nor does he identify with the material body. He knows that he is the servant of Bhagavān. This is called liberation.



**QUESTION:** It was explained that a *jīvana-mukta* is completely dedicated to serve the guru and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but still he might feel hunger and thirst, but in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it seems that Mahārāja Parīkṣit was so absorbed in hearing for seven days that he did not feel the pain of hunger and thirst. How are we to understand these two things?

**ANSWER:** Parīkṣit Mahārāja himself speaks on this point. He says, addressing Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

*naiṣātiduḥsahā kṣun mām  
tyaktodam api bādhate  
pibantaṁ tvan-mukhāmbhoja-  
cyutaṁ hari-kathāmṛtam*

“While I am drinking the nectar coming out of your mouth, hunger and thirst are not bothering me at all, although I have not drunk water.” (SB 10.1.13)

Śukadeva Gosvāmī doubted Parīkṣit Mahārāja, who became so upset by thirst that he put a dead snake on the neck of Śamīka Ṛṣi and was therefore cursed to die in seven days. How could he hear *kathā* with a peaceful mind? To remove this doubt Parīkṣit said, “These things do not bother me anymore because I am drinking the nectar.” This is to emphasize that this *kathā* was so satisfying to him that he did not care for anything else. Although all his relatives, family members, his wife, children, and everybody else was present, he did not turn his attention towards them.

Specifically, Mahārāja Parīkṣit was born to propagate *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Right from his presence in the womb, he was looking for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, his being cursed was arranged in such a manner that he could renounce everything and listen to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

This incident also illustrates how the path of *bhakti* differs from other paths. When someone becomes absorbed in *bhakti*, he is not bothered by anything else. To show the importance of *bhakti*, it is described in this manner.

In the very beginning, Parīkṣit Mahārāja also told the sages:

*taṁ mopayātaṁ pratiyantu viprā  
gaṅgā ca devī dhṛta-cittam iṣe  
dvijopasṛṣṭaḥ kuḥākas takṣako vā  
daśatv alam gāyata viṣṇu-gāthāḥ*

“I am taking shelter of you and the River Gaṅgā; please do not worry about anything, let this Takṣaka snake or whatever it may be, come and bite me but please go on reciting Kṛṣṇa-kathā and do not care for anything.” (SB 1.19.15)

## 62. Līlās

**QUESTION:** We have heard how lifting Govardhana Hill cannot be taken literally, so when I hear of these pastimes now, I try to pick out the philosophy. These pastimes, such as lifting Govardhana Hill, did not really happen, but the story is just there to explain the philosophy.

**ANSWER:** Kṛṣṇa has two features, i.e., *aiśvarya* and *mādhurya*. Due to His *aiśvarya*, He can also lift Govardhana Hill, and yet simultaneously, He has the *mādhurya* feature, too. The pastime is there to show that there is complete *aiśvarya* (majesty) and still there is *mādhurya* (sweetness). So you have to see both sides.

**QUESTION:** If the *aiśvarya* is there, then Kṛṣṇa can make the impossible possible, but on the other side, as you were saying, “How can one believe that Kṛṣṇa could lift Govardhana Hill or perform other pastimes?” I can think either this way (understanding the philosophy) or that way (taking the *līlā* literally).

**ANSWER:** You have to think in both ways. By His inconceivable power, both are possible. That is God.

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**QUESTION:** In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam there is this famous verse:

sat-saṅgena hi daiteyā yātudhānā mṛgāḥ khagāḥ  
gandharvāpsarasas nāgāḥ siddhāś cāraṇa-guhyakāḥ

vidyādhara manuṣyeṣu vaiśyāḥ śūdrāḥ striyo 'ntya-jāḥ  
rajas-tamaḥ -prakṛtayas tasmimś tasmim yuge yuge

bahavo mat-padam prāptāś tvāṣṭra-kāyādhavādayaḥ  
vṛṣaparvā balir bāṇo mayas cātha vibhīṣaṇaḥ

sugrīvo hanumān ṛkṣo gajo grdhro vaṇikpathaḥ  
vyādhāḥ kubjā vraje gopyo yajña-patnyas tathāpare

“By *sat-saṅga* alone, O Uddhava, many demons, Yātudhānas, beasts and birds, Gandharvas and Apsarās, Nāgas, Siddhas, Cāraṇas and Guhyakas, Vidyādhara and humans; *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*, women and the lowest born, possessed of a *rājasika* and *tāmasika* nature, such as Vṛtrāsura, Prahlāda, Vṛṣaparvā, Bali, Bāṇa, Māyā, and Vibhiṣaṇa; sub-humans like Sugrīva, Hanumān, Jāmbavān, the elephant (Gajendra), Jaṭāyu; the merchant Tulādhāra, Dharmavyādha, Kumbhā, the *gopīs* as well as the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* and others attained My planet in different *yugas*.” (SB 11.12.3-6)

Here Kṛṣṇa explains that only through *sat-saṅga* is He controlled. He mentions various examples of living beings that received *sat-saṅga*, including animals, demons, and women, but are not all these people the eternal associates of Bhagavān anyway?

ANSWER: When Bhagavān comes to this material world, He gives education. He also brings His own people and educates us through His *līlā*, or pastimes. He shows how by association, He uplifts. He is also conveying the message of the power of *sat-saṅga*. It is not necessary for Him to associate with people of this world and then uplift them. He portrays His pastimes with His own associates, and He puts them in different species of life and shows how they also become devotees through association.

QUESTION: However, these monkeys who are trying to steal the *mahā-prasāda* from Mahārāja, are they really taking *sat-saṅga*? What is the meaning of this verse, because the animals cannot take advantage of this *sat-saṅga*?

ANSWER: Bhagavān does this pastime just to show the greatness of *sat-saṅga*, but generally for sub-human beings it is not possible to take advantage of *sādhū-saṅga*. Bhagavān shows that *sat-saṅga* has such power. This is the power of *viśuddha-sattva*, but one must be qualified to accept it. These monkeys here, however, are completely in the lower *guṇas*. They have no understanding. If there is a proper receptacle, then it is possible, but if the proper qualification is missing, then even human beings do not accept it.

Bhagavān comes with His associates, whether they are monkeys, birds, or whatever. They only have a body like that, but they have superior consciousness. Therefore, it is possible. Possible means they (the associates) are already devotees. These pastimes are enacted in the way that human beings behave in the material world. So, Bhagavān also deals with different species of life and shows how they can become elevated, too. The idea is to think that if it is possible for animals, then it is certainly possible for human beings also.

**QUESTION:** Something eternal cannot change. Yet, how do Vaiṣṇavas explain that in the unchangeable eternal Brahman there are activities, *līlās*, etc.? There are changes; it is not static.

**ANSWER:** Vaiṣṇavas explain that Brahman is not something independent from Bhagavān.

*yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-  
koṭīṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinnaṃ  
tad brahma niṣkalam anantaṃ aśeṣa-bhūtaṃ  
govindam ādi-puruṣaṃ tam ahaṃ bhajāmi*

According to this verse of Brahma Saṁhitā (5.40), Brahman is the effulgence of Bhagavān. It exists in the external region of His planet, Vaikuṇṭha. He is a person who is also all-pervading like Brahman. People think it is Brahman that is all-pervading, niṣkriya, and niṣkalam. It does not have any activity, any parts, and it is eternal. The person to whom this quality belongs, naturally, has the attribute of being eternal.

Kṛṣṇa says in Gītā 14.27:

*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham  
amṛtasyāvyayasya ca  
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya  
sukhasyaikāntikasya ca*

“Verily I am the shelter of Brahman, of the imperishable immortality, of the eternal *dharma* (devotion), and of absolute bliss (love).”

“I am the substratum of Brahman,” and if Brahman is eternal, then naturally the substratum of that Brahman also has to be eternal.

Secondly, there is a principle in Indian logic, *nitya gatam nityam, anitya gatam anityam*. This means that the attributes of something temporary are also temporary, and the attributes or activities of the eternal are also eternal. So, if Bhagavān is eternal, then His qualities and activities are all eternal.

Activity is that which has a beginning and an end. So how can activity be eternal? It can be understood by the example of the rising sun. If we are situated in this one place, then we see that the sun rises in the east, then it goes up to its zenith at noon, and then it sets. Yet, when we see the sun rising and going up here, at another place to our west, it is still rising. And when you go to another place



further west, it is still rising. So that rising of the sun is an eternal activity. The sun is always rising somewhere, always at its zenith at noon somewhere else, and so on.

Like that, every activity of Bhagavān is eternal. There are unlimited *brahmāṇḍas*. Kṛṣṇa appears on this planet and then He grows, but when He is growing here, then He appears in another *brahmāṇḍa*. When He performs one pastime here, He then performs that same pastime in another *brahmāṇḍa*, and after that, the same pastime in another one. So it goes on like this. In this manner, all of His activities are eternal. When an activity ends in one universe, it begins in another.

QUESTION: So each change is going on eternally?

ANSWER: Yes.

## 63. Līlā-smaraṇam

QUESTION: What are the qualifications for someone to do this *līlā-smaraṇam*?

ANSWER: The qualification for *smaraṇam* is that one should be free from the identification with the body and the senses. If one identifies with these things and does *līlā-smaraṇam*, then he will enjoy them materially, because he is not free from the ego of enjoyership.

If you are following the path of *yoga*, then you have to practice *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, etc., so that you become free from the bodily concept. Otherwise, when you sit down to meditate, your permanent temperament, which is bound to be material, will become excited. The *līlās* of Bhagavān will become like a catalyst to excite your permanent material temperament. If you are not free from identification with the body, then you will just enjoy *kṛṣṇa-līlā* materially. This has nothing to do with *līlā-smaraṇam*.

*Kīrtana* does not require this qualification. Therefore, all can do *kīrtana*. However, *smaraṇam* needs some qualification, including being free from the material identification with this material body. That is why there are various steps to follow. The first step is to take shelter of the guru, do service, and then your *anarthas* will go away and you will attain the permanent mood (*sthāyi-bhāva*), or *bhāva* of devotion. Then only, it is possible to do *smaraṇam*.

**QUESTION:** Is the practice of *līlā-smaraṇam* (remembrance) in *mañjarī-bhāva* siddhantic or concocted?

**ANSWER:** *Mañjarī-bhāva* meditation is part of *līlā-smaraṇam*. It is one of the nine types of devotion, being part of *smaraṇam*, but it is for qualified people, and it cannot be given to anybody and everybody. It is for those who at least have *śraddhā* as described in the *śāstra*. This means transcendental *śraddhā*, not material *śraddhā* in the *guṇas*. This process of *līlā-smaraṇam* is taught to a person who is free from material motives. It is not given for the purpose of business.

It is a *bhāva*, consciousness, and not anything physical. The spiritual body comes later, first it is a *bhāva*. Therefore, it is called *mañjarī-bhāva*. It is not called *mañjarī* body, but *bhāva*. And consciousness is not something you can preach—rather it has to be learned first.

Previously, there were people who were qualified and they studied, understood, and practiced it. Now people have no idea. Someone comes from the West and has absolutely no idea, and you tell him “Your *svarūpa* is like a young girl of fourteen years, so you have to meditate on that!” So what is he going to meditate upon? He can only meditate on what he knows, which is a young girl meeting a young boy. What is he going to think of? Whatever he has experienced in this or in the past life, which is nothing but sex. What does this have to do with *bhakti*?

Theoretically such meditation exists, but the way it is practiced now is not the way it was practiced in the past. The reason is that unqualified people are misusing it. They have made a business out of it. Originally it was not given by the Gosvāmīs for the sake of making money or attracting followers. But now that has become the purpose. The modern gurus print it on a piece of paper and give it to the disciple at the time of initiation. That was not done before. The *svarūpa* is something which is revealed when a person becomes qualified.

There is a temple here of one *bābā*. Once, one of his disciples came to me and said, “I went to my guru and he explained to me that I am a 12-year old *mañjarī*, and he described my appearance in my eternal *svarūpa*.” So he asked me what this all means, because his guru did not explain anything to him about the process. What is the use of such revelation? It has been made very cheap these days.

In *Bhakt-rasāmṛta-sindhu* itself, Rūpa Gosvāmī says that you do service with your physical body and also with your *bhāva-deha*:

*sevā sādḥaka-rūpeṇa  
siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi  
tad-bhāva-lipsunā kāryā  
vraja-lokānusārataḥ*

“A person desiring to get the *bhāva* of *rāgānugā-bhakti* should execute *bhakti* both with his physical body and with his perfected body, following in the footsteps of the residents of Vraja.” (BRS 1.2.295)

That kind of meditation exists, but there is a qualification for it.

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**QUESTION:** What if someone has surrendered to his guru, has *śraddhā*, and is dedicated, but there is no specific information given to him about *mañjarī-bhāva*. Is it necessary that this information be given to him so he can attain *mañjarī-bhāva*?

**ANSWER:** *Mañjarī-bhāva* means the ultimate limit of surrender. It is another word for *dāsyā-bhāva*. It is the highest level of *dāsyā-bhāva* (the mood of servitorship), and Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals it. No one else has the power to give you a transcendental body. Giving *mañjarī-bhāva* means engaging you in Kṛṣṇa's service. There is no human being who can do that. Therefore, God Himself gives it. If a person is completely surrendered to the guru and serves him, then the guru is inspired by Kṛṣṇa to reveal this fact.

Alternatively, like in the example of Nārada Muni, Kṛṣṇa may inspire the devotee. When Nārada explained about his past life, he explained how he received a transcendental body. Therefore, whether it is revealed directly by Śrī Kṛṣṇa or is given by the guru who is inspired by Kṛṣṇa, it is basically the same thing. It is described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* how by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's grace, Nārada attained a *suddha bhāgavatīm tanum* (SB 1.6.28), which means his transcendental body. [Nārada's qualifications are mentioned in SB 1.6.27 as “fully absorbed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa” and “free from attachments and other material taints,” and in SB 1.6.26 as “fully satisfied, completely freed from all material desires, humble, and non-envious.”]

Those sages with whom Nārada associated did not tell him anything about his *svarūpa*. They didn't write this on a piece of paper and give it to him.

When someone has a genuine guru and is completely surrendered, which means that he does not identify with his birth, country, family, sex, and so forth, but has developed the ego of a servant of Bhagavān, at that time, Bhagavān inspires the guru to reveal this information so that the disciple can meditate in the prescribed manner.

Otherwise, what is happening now is all business. In fact, these people have really no idea about *mañjarī-bhāva*. It is not just a body of a young girl. The first thing is *bhāva*. If a man meditates on having the body of a young female, how will this take him to Śrī Kṛṣṇa? You go to Śrī Kṛṣṇa not by meditating on yourself as a female but by becoming a servant. If a man is going to meditate that he is a female, then what about women? They are already females. So what will they meditate on? This is all cheating. *Uttama-bhakti*, however, is completely free of cheating. This type of procedure or practice which you may have heard has nothing to do with the real thing. It is all cheating in the name of *bhakti*. One should not become influenced by it because it sounds very appealing. It is appealing because we have the experience of sex life. Otherwise, what is the big deal that a man wants to become a woman? Many times we hear women complaining that they are exploited and oppressed by males. They say that even being a woman for one day is so difficult. The main reason a man would want to become a woman is because of his attraction to sex. For him, it is pleasing to think of a young woman associating with a young boy. That is not *bhakti*.

Instead of calling it *mañjarī-bhāva*, name it *āsuriḱa bhāva*, because it will turn a person completely against God. If he is a *sādhū* to begin with, and then he is given this meditation, although he is not qualified, the practice of this meditation will naturally agitate his mind. Externally, he will make a show of being a *sādhū*, but internally his mind will be completely full of the desire for sex. Then he has to become a hypocrite here, in the land of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the name of doing the highest *sādhana*, he will become a debauchee. He will be forced to engage in illicit sex life. Therefore, this is *āsuriḱa bhāva*. Who has authorized these gurus to give this *bhāva* to neophytes? What is their qualification? I do not know.

[See also: *siddha-praṇālī*]

## 64. Love, Material

**QUESTION:** When a mother has a child, she has special love for child, which is coming from God. Is this love spiritual or only material?



ANSWER: It is instinctive, so that the mother will take care of the child, otherwise the child will not survive.

QUESTION: Is this love of the mother like a spiritual energy or only some material attachment?

ANSWER: It is material.

QUESTION: But given by God?

ANSWER: Yes.

## 65. Lust, Greed, and Anger

QUESTION: After a person surrenders, do lust, greed, and envy disappear gradually, or do they disappear immediately?

ANSWER: When one takes shelter of the guru, then *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha* (lust, greed, and anger), etc., go away immediately. These things exist only when the person thinks himself to be independent. Surrender, however, means that he is not independent. When he/she follows truthfully and is serving sincerely, then lust, etc., have no scope. However, this should be understood properly. Lust, greed, and anger do not literally go away, as people who are on the path of *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc., believe. They remain, but only in relation to *bhakti* and not independently. For example, it does not mean that a devotee will never become angry, as *yogīs* and *jñānīs* believe. Rather, he will become angry if someone puts an obstacle to his service or criticizes Kṛṣṇa, guru, or the path of *bhakti*.

In *uttama-bhakti* you have to perform service, and this service is done with body, mind, senses, and speech. All these things have their objects. So obviously, the bodily activities, the senses, and the mind will also have lust, greed, and anger, but now they will be used only in favorable acts and you will avoid what is unfavorable. These vices will not disappear in the sense that you will become inert, inactive, or reclusive. It is not like that. Lust, greed, and anger will remain, but now they will be used in service and how to use them in the service has to be studied or learned from the guru.

QUESTION: What if you do not have the opportunity to use, for example, anger?

ANSWER: Then you do not use it.

QUESTION: Then you have to bear it?

ANSWER: You have to see if it is favorable or unfavorable. You do not become angry with devotees or the guru. You can become angry with non-devotees or somebody who is creating an obstacle, which means, anger should not be unfavorable. So you do not have to bear it. Either you use it or it remains latent. Anger will manifest only when there is a need for it.

QUESTION: So lust, greed, and anger will always be there, but somehow or other we have to bear it?

ANSWER: Yes, they will be there, but you do not have to bear them. These things do not go away in the literal sense, as declared on other paths. In *uttama-bhakti*, control is automatically there if you engage in service. For example, somebody is creating trouble for your service, then anger will come. Otherwise, it will not come. So it does not go away in the sense that you never become angry. You do not have to suppress it or bear it. It will not become manifest unless there is a good reason for it to appear. You have control over it, not that it controls you.

## 66. Mamatva (My-ness, Attachment to Bhagavān)

QUESTION: When a disciple aspires to become *tadātma* with the guru, at this point, there is no independence on the part of the disciple, but there is still individuality. There is also the possibility of a disciple imitating the character of the guru. Can you say something about that?

ANSWER: This oneness with the guru's heart does not mean imitation. There is a difference between imitation and following. If one imitates the guru, then one goes to hell. Imitation means that you take the guru's position.

The guru is the master and the disciple is a servant. This oneness is in the *bhāva*, which means we need to understand the guru's interest and goal, and then to serve him and always respect him. A disciple can never occupy the position of the guru. He should always be respectful to the guru. He should not even cross over objects that have been used by the guru or even touch the guru's shadow with his feet. So where is the question of imitating?

Following means to follow his instructions, be truthful to him, have the same interest, and always consider oneself as his servant.

It means to always keep the guru in his vision, externally and internally, and follow his ideals.

That is the meaning of oneness, although one's own existence has to be separate, because if there is no separate existence, then where is the question of following? In complete oneness, there cannot be any following or worship. But if the guru is worshiped, followed, and respected, then naturally the disciple must have a separate existence. However, even while having a separate existence, the interest and aim are one. The disciple does not have any separate interest. If his interests are separate from the guru, then this will deviate him to the material world.

To have exactly the same interest and goal as the guru and keeping nothing for oneself is the only way that one can become free from material existence. This is the meaning of being free from all cheating propensity or being truthful, honest, or sincere. There is a lot of difference between imitation and following.

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**QUESTION:** This desire for independence seems to be rooted so deeply that it seems almost impossible to get rid of it, even if we philosophically understand that it is the cause of our bondage and non-devotion. How can this desire for independence actually be removed?

**ANSWER:** Only when you have a liking (*mamatva*) for the guru will you give up your independence. Śrī Caitanya propagated *uttama-bhakti* only for this purpose. Otherwise, before His appearance, people only knew about *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and at most liberation, *mokṣa*. *Uttama-bhakti* is based on *rāga* (deep attachment), where one feels oneself to be one with Bhagavān and not separate from Him. And this is the real oneness. Take for example, the [traditional] mother, who is so concerned about her baby, that she will feed the baby first even though she may be hungry herself. She does not think, "I am separate, let me eat and to hell with this baby." [Some modern mothers do behave like this.] Yet, when the same baby grows up and the mother loses attachment for the boy, who may be no longer according to her liking, then the same mother can kill the boy.

When *mamatva*, or deep affection, is there, then you cannot remain separate. That is the only solution for the desire for independence. There is no other solution for it. Therefore, not even covering of *jñāna* or *karma* should be there. The covering of *jñāna* and *karma*

mean that you have a separatist mentality. This separatist mentality can only be washed away by *mamatva*—a strong *rāga*, or affection.

This is the knowledge that Śrī Caitanya has given us. Otherwise, in the *Bhāgavatam* there are stories of sages like Saubhari Muni. He had been practicing sense control for thousands of years, but because he considered himself as independent, he had the idea that he could enjoy separately from Bhagavān. In *uttama-bhakti*, however, this is impossible. For example, there is a cat here in the *gośālā*, which has just given birth to four kittens. Whenever she finds a rat, she will immediately catch it and bring it to the kittens. If she considered herself independent and selfish, then she would eat the rat herself. So, even a mother cat gives up her independence, because she has this feeling of affection for her kittens. When the same kittens are grown up, they fight with the mother and she fights back. Later on, she will not feed them anymore. Here, of course, the example is only to show the feeling of affection, and how she will starve herself to feed her kittens when they are young.

QUESTION: So when the affection is actually there, then naturally or as a by-product the desire for independence vanishes?

ANSWER: Yes. It goes immediately. There is not even a trace of it left. You see it in the example of the cat. She will not eat herself but will first feed her kittens and will eat only later on. She will even go hungry so that they can eat.

QUESTION: And there again, this affection cannot be cultivated, right? This is again coming by grace?

ANSWER: Yes.

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QUESTION: You often speak about *mamatva*, the feeling of my-ness. Could you explain more about this?

ANSWER: The word "I" denotes a particular individual, and the quality of that object is *mamatva*. "I" refers to the conscious object in this body, the self, or *ātmā*. It is the *ātmā* that gives us the sense of "I." The characteristic of that conscious object, or self, is called *mamatva*, the feeling of possessiveness, the sense of "my" or "mine." Thus the sense of "I" and "my" or "mine" go together. The sense of "I" is the subjective feeling which spreads into objects through the sense of "my," *mamatva*. This is how "I" extends itself outwardly.

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QUESTION: How does a devotee feel when the spiritual energy enters the senses and the mind?

ANSWER: The experience is that one feels related to Bhagavān and feels that the things that are related to the guru belong to him. This is the experience, which means one has a relationship of servant and master; the devotee is the servant and Bhagavān is worshipable, or the One who is to be served. This is the experience or the inner consciousness that such a person gets.

QUESTION: Is it the same as this feeling of *mamatva* meaning that Bhagavān belongs to one and one belongs to Bhagavān?

ANSWER: Yes.

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QUESTION: To develop attachment for the guru, one would need to spend time with the guru, get to know him and communicate with him; otherwise, it would be artificial. If you meet somebody for the first time and then decide that you have attachment for that person, then that could be artificial.

ANSWER: Generally yes, but in Mahārāja's own case, it just came spontaneously.

QUESTION: What happens if that *mamatva* does not come spontaneously?

ANSWER: If there is natural liking, then that is the best. However, if that is not the case, then you have to first decide whether you want to follow this process or not. Do you want to follow *nivṛtti-mārga* or not? And if you want to follow *nivṛtti-mārga*, make that your resolve, and then you will be determined about it. Then you will follow this path with *śraddhā* (trust). That means you act favorably and avoid unfavorable action. You behave with the guru as you would like to act with Kṛṣṇa, as if you met Kṛṣṇa. So you start with that feeling and then it will grow.

Otherwise, generally, familiarity breeds contempt. Just proximity will not give you any attachment. There has to be a seed. The seed is the resolve that, "This is the process I want to follow."

Otherwise, the seed in everybody's mind in this material world is *dveṣa*, or dislike. *Śraddhā* is not the natural *bhāva* in the material world. If the resolve to follow *bhakti* is not there, then it is the other

seed, that of *dveṣa*, which will work. Then familiarity with the guru will bring dislike instead of attachment to him. First, that resolve should be there, and then association will help you.

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QUESTION: In the absence of direct instructions, is the only way to understand what is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and the guru revealed in the heart through one's own sincerity?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Then it is all a question of the heart?

ANSWER: Right.

QUESTION: If one is sincere and surrendered in the heart, then one will understand what service is pleasing and so on.

ANSWER: Yes. That is what I said. In this process, there is oneness of the heart between the guru and the disciple.

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QUESTION: Could you elaborate more on *mamatva* (my-ness, attachment) and what should be the consciousness of a disciple in relationship to the guru?

ANSWER: This consciousness of *mamatva* is similar to our attachment to our own body or things related to the body. Our body is the object of the word "I." It is denoted by "I." We also have the feeling of *mamatva* or my-ness towards our body. "I" and "my" are related. *Mamatva* is a feeling of something being one's own.

In the same way, if you want to go to God or Kṛṣṇa then you have to have a similar consciousness towards Him. The guru is the manifestation of God. We have to practice this consciousness of *mamatva* towards the guru.

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QUESTION: How do we express the feeling that "you are mine" to our guru?

ANSWER: There are two types of consciousness or temperaments. In the first one, there is the feeling of "I belong to you," and in

the other, one feels "You belong to me." These can be material or spiritual feelings.

In the material world, there are relations like husband and wife or servant and master, where the servant has the feeling that he belongs to the master, but this is simply business. The servant is not really completely surrendered to the master, because in this business type of relationship, one performs a service for a material purpose (in exchange for money, goods, services, etc.).

In the spiritual world, however, one has the consciousness that one belongs to Bhagavān, and one performs service to Bhagavān and is dependent on Him. However, if one does not follow this mood, then the relationship is severed. When one has the feeling that Bhagavān is one's own or the guru is one's own, then one is motivated by the desire to please Bhagavān or the guru. He develops the consciousness of how to please, how to satisfy Bhagavān and act in a way that it is pleasing to Him. This is an eternal relationship.

In a material relationship, there is also service, but it is done with a motive. In a spiritual relationship, there is only the desire to please Bhagavān or guru, and no other motive. There is no concern for anything else. This is the basic difference between the two.

## 67. Material Desires

**QUESTION:** But what about one's material desires when one is still attached?

**ANSWER:** Material desires will change after one has surrendered. Just as in Vedic culture, when a girl marries a boy, she adjusts her life according to her husband's lifestyle. For instance, prior to marriage she ate one type of food and after marriage she eats another type of food, which the husband eats. There is an instant change. When the ego is changed, your actions change immediately. It is a very simple thing.

Similarly, when you go to an office and you work there for eight hours a day, you will have the ego "I work in this company, I belong to this company, this is my company." People carry this ego with them wherever they go and they even introduce themselves by saying, "I work for such and such bank or for such and such company." You associate with this ego so much that when something favorable happens to the company, you feel elated, or if something

unfavorable happens, you feel depressed. That ego is there all the time, and then, correspondingly, one's activities change. You take up a job today in, say, the Apple Company, and from tomorrow on, you start behaving like an Apple man.

If you understand the meaning of *dīkṣā*, then the change occurs immediately at the time of *dīkṣā*. However, if you only go through the ritual and do not understand the meaning, then all these questions of 10% or 50% surrender arise. It is something that has to be practically experienced.

For example, the *vraja-vāsīs* surrendered everything for the sake of Kṛṣṇa, including their houses, relatives, wealth, and even their desires. Yet, they remained in family life. This is a very striking thing. Please try to understand it. After the *rāsa-līlā* dance, Śrī Kṛṣṇa sent the *gopīs* back to their homes. They did not live with Him. People think *rāsa-līlā* is the highest pastime. Yet, after that, all *gopīs* went back to their families. They did not give up their family life or daily activities. But everything they had was for the sake of Kṛṣṇa.

There are many practical examples of surrender, such as seen with the struggle for India's independence during the British rule. People like Subash Candra Bose and Mahātmā Gandhi gave speeches in the colleges and universities. Students joined them, not caring for anything. They did not think, "What will happen to me? Who will maintain me? Who will support me? What will my parents think?" They surrendered spontaneously and were completely determined to follow these leaders. So many of them sacrificed their lives, and this was just for the sake of independence. *Bhakti* demands even more surrender than that, but we are not even doing what the students in the independence struggle did, and yet we expect results.

It is just like modern politicians who also speak the same language as the leaders of the past, but they are all making business out of it. So, nobody surrenders to them. Their followers also make a show of surrender. Both, the leader as well as the followers know this in their hearts but do not express it externally. People come to the path of *bhakti* these days, especially in India, with the desire to have some economic gain or get some position in the Maṭha or get married or travel to a foreign country. *Bhakti* is not meant for that.

The *gopīs* are the topmost example of surrender, and even though they were completely surrendered, they still remained in family life.



**QUESTION:** In *Mādhurya Kaḍambinī* under *aniṣṭhitā-bhakti*, six points are mentioned. Is it so that we can combat these things or is it that we can recognize them and see where the problems are?

**ANSWER:** You use knowledge of a problem to get rid of it. Just knowing will not help.

**QUESTION:** How can we deal with them?

**ANSWER:** The way of dealing is described there, and it is *bhajana-kriyā*. These descriptions in *Mādhurya Kaḍambinī* describe the different levels of progress of devotees. These levels are experienced only in *vaidhī-bhakti*. Such states do not happen in *uttama-bhakti*. Right from the point of *śraddhā*, the person does not face any of these problems in *uttama-bhakti*, because *uttama-bhakti* is the *svarūpa-śakti* of Bhagavān. One has complete faith, interest, and desire for service.

When the desire for service is there, there is no possibility of any other disturbance, such as the mind deviating to something else or fluctuating, sometimes taking interest and sometimes getting depressed. These things happen in *vaidhī-bhakti*, because in *vaidhī* there is some mixture of the material *guṇas*. Only when a person is under the influence of the *guṇas* does the mind experience such states. Sometimes the mind is in the higher *sattva-guṇa*, sometimes in *tamas*, and sometimes in *rajas*. A *vaidhī bhakta* has to follow different routines of diet, practice, meditation, or rules and regulation to improve his status so that he can become situated in the higher *guṇas*. By strict practice, he improves slowly. However, in *uttama-bhakti* there are no steps like that. Right from the beginning one is free from all problems.

**QUESTION:** So I am fluctuating ...

**ANSWER:** Fluctuation is only in the material *guṇas*. For example, if you are very thirsty, there is no fluctuation. You are thinking, "Where can I find water?" It is not that you fluctuate, and sometimes you want to drink and sometimes you don't.

In *uttama-bhakti*, right from the beginning, there is no independence. The person does not feel that he is independent from the guru. He is not attached to his body nor does he have other desires. Therefore, such problems do not arise for him. These problems come if you think that you are independent and you are attached to the body and have other desires or different motives. In

*uttama-bhakti*, such notions are given up right from the beginning, so there is no deviation or fluctuation.

QUESTION: But sometimes I recognize myself in these descriptions, my mind is fluctuating. Does it mean that I am on the way?

ANSWER: That is what it shows.

QUESTION: Are these descriptions important to know?

ANSWER: These descriptions are important to know if you are fluctuating. You have to know *uttama-bhakti*, and to know *uttama-bhakti* you also have to know other type of *bhakti* so that you can make distinctions. These descriptions in *Mādhurya Kaṣambinī* give that knowledge. People come from different backgrounds or paths, so all types of mixtures are there, and they have to be clearly understood. Otherwise, if one is properly situated in *uttama-bhakti*, then right from the beginning these problems of the mind do not come.

QUESTION: What does "right from the beginning" mean? And what's there from the beginning to the end?

ANSWER: If there are any problems, they go away, and right from the very beginning, they do not cause any disturbance. If there are any traces remaining, they are washed away.

First of all, the person has to have firm faith. One should not make any other plans consciously, but if there are any *vāsanās* (desires) remaining from previous *saṁskāras*, then they will disappear by doing service. The mind does not fluctuate in waves, as described in *Mādhurya Kaṣambinī*. For a practicing devotee in *uttama-bhakti*, such *vāsanās* may appear in the mind, but he still continues with his service and does not waver.

However in *vaidhī*, the practitioner actually stops because of fluctuations of the mind. Due to other interests, he starts deliberating and thinking, "Am I right?" This does not happen to a person in *uttama-bhakti*.

If you understand what transcendental *śraddhā*, or faith is, you will know the difference. In transcendental faith there is no doubt, because transcendental faith means that you have complete trust in the meaning of scripture. You have *niścaya* (fixity), or determination, and then there are no doubts.

In transcendental *śraddhā*, there is no mixture of the *guṇas*. Only when one has material *śraddhā* does one fluctuate. If one is following a spiritual path like *jñāna*, *yoga*, etc., one's *śraddhā* is in *sattva-guṇa*. But *sattva-guṇa* is not stable, because the *guṇas* keep on changing. So the person will fluctuate. Sometimes *tamo-guṇa* becomes prominent, sometimes *rajo-guṇa*, and sometimes *sattva-guṇa*. Depending on which *guṇa* is prominent, the person's mind will change, but if *śraddhā* is transcendental, there is no such change.

Stories in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* of Saubhari Muni, Cyavana Muni, and even the Kumāras, who are Brahman-realized, depict this point. Their *śraddhā* is in *sattva-guṇa*, and although they are doing their austerities or meditation for long periods of time, they still fluctuate. Only to refute this kind of *śraddhā* and to show that in *bhakti* the *śraddhā* is transcendental, these examples are given as *pūrva-pakṣa*, or contrary examples. They are not the ideal examples to follow, but meant to be rejected.

Even the Kumāras, who were very elevated people, became angry at the gatekeepers of Śrī Viṣṇu. The gatekeepers were doing their job by stopping the naked Kumāras at the gate. Why did the Kumāras become angry? That means that they were still under the influence of the material *guṇas*. But the gatekeepers did not get angry at Kumāras. They could have also cursed them back, as happened in case of Dakṣa and the followers of Śiva.

This is to show that only *bhakti* is completely transcendental and there is no deviation from it. However, because people come with different backgrounds and with different motives, this type of analysis is also done in *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Where does the inability to follow come from?

ANSWER: It is because of ignorance.

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QUESTION: The hidden *vāsanās*, which a *mūrccita-kaṣāya* (one whose material desires are under control) devotee has, can they also be *aparādhās*, like in the case of Bharata Mahārāja?

ANSWER: Nārada, in his last life, did not commit any offenses. His *sāttvika-kaṣāya* was that he liked the peaceful atmosphere of the forest. Bharata Mahārāja practiced *vaidhī-bhakti*.

In *uttama-bhakti* there is no question of *vāsanās* (desires) separate from Kṛṣṇa, because one has and performs *bhakti* from the very beginning without any independent desires. *Mūrccita-kaṣāya* exists because there are independent desires (*vāsanās*). Therefore, there is still a trace of contamination and this can also be an offense.

One can reach the stage of *nirdhūta-kaṣāya* (one whose impurities have been dispelled) either from the path of *vaidhī* or *uttama-bhakti*.

The story of Bharata Mahārāja in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is an example to show the power of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is never lost, even if one is in the body of an animal.

## 68. Māyā

**QUESTION:** In *bhakti*, or in the process of surrender to the Lord, Jīva Gosvāmī describes how one dispels *māyā*. This statement indicates that although one is surrendered to the Lord, one is trying to dispel *māyā* by one's own knowledge and renunciation. Will surrendering to God dispel *māyā*?

**ANSWER:** One who has not surrendered cannot dispel *māyā*. One who takes shelter will get *jñāna* and *vairāgya*, and then it is possible to dispel *māyā*. You can only understand the tricks of a magician by surrendering to him.

After that, Jīva Gosvāmī talks about *bhakti*. Without taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa, there is no knowledge, because knowledge does not mean just knowing Kṛṣṇa or Bhagavān. It also means knowing yourself in relation to Him. You have to know that you are a part, and He is the whole. He is the controller, and you are the controlled. Kṛṣṇa is the whole, and you are the part. Only this type of knowledge is necessary, and not the type of knowledge that teaches you to think, "I am one with the Absolute," as propagated by Śaṅkarācārya. Such knowledge will not give you liberation. As Kṛṣṇa says:

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī  
mama māyā duratyayā  
mām eva ye prapadyante  
māyām etān taranti te*

"This divine energy of Mine, *māyā*, constituted of three *guṇas* is indeed very difficult to surmount. Those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this *māyā*." (Gītā 7.14)



So *prapatti*, surrender or taking refuge, means knowing that He is superior and you are inferior. If you think of Him as equal to you, then there is no *prapatti*. Therefore you cannot escape *māyā*. The Gosvāmīs established that Bhagavān is not *niśaktika* (without any power or energies). He is *śaśaktika* (having power, potency). Therefore, by His power, Bhagavān can influence the external potency (*bahirāṅgā-śakti*). Otherwise, how can one overcome it?

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QUESTION: If we make a resolve but somehow *māyā* overpowers us, then how can that be an offense?

ANSWER: That does not happen. After you make a resolve, there is no such thing as *māyā* overpowering you.

QUESTION: But in my case it is there.

ANSWER: There is no *māyā* on the path of *bhakti*. There is *māyā* on the path of *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *karma*, but in *bhakti* there is no *māyā*. This is what Kṛṣṇa says:

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī  
mama māyā duratyayā  
mām eva ye prapadyante  
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

“This divine energy of mine, *māyā*, constituted of three *guṇas* is indeed very difficult to surmount. Those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this *māyā*.” (Gītā 7.14)

“Only those who take shelter of Me cross over *māyā*.” *Māyā* means ignorance, and if one becomes a devotee and understands that he is a servant of Bhagavān, then there is no ignorance. Ignorance is about one’s own *svārūpa*. On other paths, they do not teach that we are servants of Bhagavān and that our *svārūpa* is to serve Bhagavān.

Therefore ignorance remains on other paths, and one remains independent and works with one’s own independent ego, and struggles to attain something by one’s own strength. Therefore one remains in *māyā*. However, when one becomes a devotee and surrenders to the guru and understands that he is a servant of the guru and Bhagavān, there is no question of *māyā*. Such a person does not feel that he is independent.

Moreover, *māyā* is also a servant of Bhagavān. When a person surrenders to Bhagavān and becomes His servant, then *māyā* does not trouble the servant. *Māyā* troubles only those who are not surrendered to Bhagavān and who do not want to serve. She does not trouble a devotee.

QUESTION: That is the proof that we are not surrendered?

ANSWER: Yes, that is the proof. That is what I am saying, "People are not truthful." If they are truthful and sincere, then there is absolutely no problem on this path. If you follow other paths, then you have to do so many complicated things. For example in *yoga-mārga*, there is *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, etc., but *bhakti* is simple. Bhagavān has not given any complicated process for a person to become a devotee. It is *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. It is not even fixed that service must be done in a particular way. There are no complications, and there is absolutely no *māyā* on this path of *bhakti*. In fact, this is the only path that is free from *māyā*. If *māyā* was also on this path, then there would be no way to get out of *māyā*.

## 69. Mercy

QUESTION: How does a disciple who is under the influence of the *guṇas* and as such is a conditioned *jīva*, recognize a *sat-guru*?

ANSWER: An ordinary person cannot figure out a *sat-guru*. It is by Īśvara's will, which is causeless, that a person is inspired to come into the association of a saintly person. You perform the activities, Īśvara gives the result, and you have no control over it.

In fact, all the essential things are under His control, although people may think they are independent. Where you take birth, when you will die, whom you will meet, what result you will get from your actions, etc.—all this is under Īśvara's control. When He wants your material existence to come to an end, then *sādhū-saṅga*, or *sat-saṅga*, is given. And the inspiration is given to you to become interested and inquisitive about this subject. This He will do, and then if you take advantage of this opportunity, He will further give you more inspiration and mercy. However, if you misuse this, then you can continue to wander in the material world. Otherwise, nobody has the ability to figure out a *sat-guru*. This happens by *yadṛcchayā*, Īśvara's arrangement, which is causeless.

QUESTION: Sometimes in the *śāstra* we hear that by good fortune a person could hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. What does good fortune mean? Does it mean that one person is lucky and another is not?

ANSWER: Good fortune means that somebody is getting a good opportunity.

QUESTION: Does that mean that one will get the opportunity and another one will not?

ANSWER: Yes. Obviously, if everybody would have this good fortune, then everybody would get a chance. Good fortune is the mercy of *Īśvara*. If you are speaking from the material point of view, then winning the lottery would be considered good fortune, but in *bhakti*, good fortune means that you become inclined towards *bhakti*.

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QUESTION: Can we say that all situations in which we find ourselves are because of *Kṛṣṇa*'s arrangement or are there situations where the guru shows us certain things?

ANSWER: For those who are not following *Īśvara*'s injunctions, they cannot take their situations as being *Kṛṣṇa*'s arrangement or mercy. Otherwise, if you think like this, then nobody will make any endeavor to follow the right path. *Kṛṣṇa* comes to establish *dharma* and to annihilate *adharma*. If there is *adharma*, you cannot just say, "Well, that is also *Kṛṣṇa*'s arrangement," and then become complacent and make no endeavor to follow the right path.

If something is not *sat*, or righteous, or religious, then you cannot just take this as *Kṛṣṇa*'s arrangement. Just as when people follow the wrong things and become very attached to them, in the same mood, you should also try to follow the right thing if you have the inspiration. That is *Kṛṣṇa*'s mercy. Not that somebody gets the inspiration to do the wrong thing and thinks, "Oh, this is God's mercy." That cannot be accepted as God's mercy. He gives knowledge, and He has given you the intelligence and freedom to understand and follow it. So it is you who has to make a conscious effort to follow it. If you are not able to follow God's instructions, then you cannot make God responsible for it. It is wrong to think like that.

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**QUESTION:** Is there something such as *kṛpā-siddha* and *sādhana-siddha* in *śāstra*, and what is their meaning?

**ANSWER:** These two divisions are described in *śāstra*. For instance, Dhruva Mahārāja attained perfection by performing *sādhana*, but Śukadeva or Bali Mahārāja received the mercy and became *siddha*.

**QUESTION:** I have heard some people say, "If one gets the mercy from the guru, then one does not have to follow a *sādhana* and still they will attain perfection." Is this the proper understanding?

**ANSWER:** This is what *kṛpā-siddha* means; you get *kṛpā* and then you become perfect.

## 70. Mind, Intelligence, Ego and Consciousness

**QUESTION:** What is the function of mind, intelligence, ego, and *citta*?

**ANSWER:** The mind (*manas*) gives thoughts, the intelligence (*buddhi*) makes decisions, the ego (*ahamkāra*) holds on to them, and the heart, or consciousness, (*citta*) stores these impressions. For example, there is an object, say, a sweetmeat in a shop. First you receive knowledge about it with the help of the eyes and the mind, then the ego gives the idea, "I can buy it and eat it," then the intelligence makes the resolve, "I should buy it and eat it," and then you buy it and eat it. *Citta* will store the experience of eating. Yet, without the *ātmā*, all of that wouldn't be possible.

**QUESTION:** When the creation is going on, *śāstra* says that the mind, *manas*, is in *sattva-guṇa*, but the intelligence, *buddhi*, in *rajas*. How to understand that, when the intelligence is supposed to be higher than the mind?

**ANSWER:** The material *guṇas* do not exist in their pure state. They are always mixed, but there is always one that is predominant. For example, generally *buddhi* is predominated by *rajas*, and the mind by *sattva*. *Buddhi* is said to be higher, because *buddhi* can control the mind. Controlling is a feature of *rajas* and not of *sattva*.



QUESTION: What is the difference between *buddhi* and *medhā*?

ANSWER: *Medhā*, or the ability to understand, is a part or function of *buddhi*.

## 71. Moon Eclipse

QUESTION: Today there is an eclipse of the moon. Do Vaiṣṇavas do something special at this inauspicious time?

ANSWER: Eating is forbidden during an eclipse. That is all.

QUESTION: Does the *prasāda* become contaminated during the eclipse time?

ANSWER: Yes, any cooked food becomes contaminated. One is supposed to take a bath during the eclipse and also when it is over, and do some charitable act.

QUESTION: Does this have relevance for devotees on the *rāgānugā mārگا*?

ANSWER: No. What relevance does this have for *bhakti*? These rules are there mainly for health purposes. Just do not eat during the eclipse time.

## 72. Mystic Powers

QUESTION: I am reading "The Autobiography of a Yogī" by Yogānanda. In it, he describes the mystic powers of *yogis*, but in *bhakti* this is not necessary, because the goal is love of God. Can you elaborate on this?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is a separate path, and there is no utility or use for mystic powers in it. This is a path of service, and the devotee is interested only in doing service. Even if Kṛṣṇa wants to give him mystic power, he is not interested in it unless it is useful in service. If one wants to acquire these mystic powers, he will have to become absorbed in his body and remain attached to it. In *bhakti* it is not useful for anybody, neither for himself nor for others, except that one can do some magic and get some followers. But how does it help others?

Another thing is that generally, it is false. Nobody has any mystic power. I have met the greatest of *yogīs* and nobody had anything. It is all just a show. I asked many of them to show me any mystic power. So many *yogīs* frankly told me that they do not have any power. Many people who came here from *Mahārāṣṭra* were even manifesting *mahābhāva* and going into trance, but it was a hoax.

On the path of devotion, there is absolutely no utility for one to have mystic powers. You should be very clear about it. If you have any interest in mystic powers, then you will go away from the path of devotion. This is the path of doing favorable service, and if one wants mystic powers, that means he wants something for himself.

### 73. Offenses (Aparādhās)

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja give us some advice about how to avoid committing an offense?

ANSWER: First you have to know what the offenses are. There are ten offenses against the Name (*nāma-aparādhā*), and 32 offenses in the service of the deity (*sevā-aparādhā*). After knowing them, they must be avoided carefully. Do not commit them knowingly.

Why are people committing offenses? The reason is that everybody has pride. Devotion means service for the pleasure of Bhagavān, which means for the pleasure of the guru. Service has to be done in such a manner that the guru is pleased with it, and you should not perform action that is displeasing.

In the material world, we are not independent. If somebody does service to another person who is not all-powerful, the latter may tolerate the offenses committed by the person working for him, but in the case of Bhagavān, He is completely independent. He does not have to tolerate anybody's action if they are displeasing to Him. Here we are limited and we need the help of others, so we tend to tolerate, but Bhagavān has no such need. He already has people who are serving Him. He does not tolerate if you commit an offense. Therefore, it must be avoided. You should not think that just because you are doing service, you should not care for anybody's advice including the guru's.

For example, sometimes people bring a servant to the *gośālā* to do service, and because the person has brought the servant to do

service here, he develops ego that he is the controller of this servant. Therefore no one should bother "his" servant. He feels offended if somebody says anything to the servant. Ultimately the service in the *gośālā* is done under my care, but then even I have to think, "If I say something to the servant then that person will become offended and because I have to get the service done, I have to tolerate it." However, Kṛṣṇa is not going to tolerate such behavior.

Offenses happen because everybody has the pride of "I am the doer, without me it will not happen." We have to avoid this mentality. Otherwise, *bhakti* is a simple process, because it is practical. It is not like other processes in which you perform certain activities to get certain results. Just as if you walk with speed, then you will definitely cover a long distance, but in *bhakti* it does not happen like that. It is not that if you chant so many rounds, then you will get that result, or if you perform some service for a certain amount of time, you will receive part of a result. The important thing is the mentality behind your service.

If one is simple-hearted and straightforward, then the *anarthas* will be removed. This is done by *bhajana-kriyā*, which means service. As one begins performing service, the *anarthas*, or the unwanted things, that are lying in the heart will come out. This means *anarthas-nivṛtti* will happen. If one has faith in the process one will cross over the difficulties. Otherwise, if one commits offenses, then Kṛṣṇa will leave such a person. He will not have anything to do with him. Even if such a person chants, God will run away from him, thinking, "I do not know what this guy is going to do to me." It is not that chanting always attracts Kṛṣṇa. When a person with offensive mentality chants, then Kṛṣṇa is not attracted to him. Therefore, offenses must be avoided at all costs.

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**QUESTION:** If we have committed offences, what can we do to neutralize them?

**ANSWER:** On this path of devotion, there is no atonement, repentance, or confession as they have in the Christian religion. The reason is that if somebody makes a mistake and is forgiven, this will become his habit. He will get strength from this and commit the mistake again, because he thinks, "I have made this mistake, and I do not really have to be careful, because if I make a mistake, then I will be forgiven or I can confess." In this way, he will not make advancement.

[Mahārāja was quoting a few times the statement that the Holy Name is very merciful and the friend of everybody, but if someone commits offenses against the Holy Name, then he falls down.]

Generally, people make mistakes and are forgiven, but on this path, as it has already been explained, you have to do service. One surrenders and serves for the favor or pleasure of Bhagavān, so that He is pleased with it. This brings development in one's personality. A person then becomes a real human being. His development reaches the highest platform. Otherwise, he will keep his independent nature, because he will think, "If I make a mistake I can repent and lament." Thus, when one is told that there is no forgiveness, then one will avoid making such mistakes. Knowingly, one should not commit offenses, because there is no remedy for an offense.

Chota Haridāsa is an example of someone who made a very small mistake. However, Śrī Caitanya never forgave him, because if he had done so, then people would develop the habit that it is all right to make mistakes. Although many people asked Śrī Caitanya to forgive Chota Haridāsa, He did not give in. Even when Chota Haridāsa committed suicide, He was not moved. Whenever people pleaded to Him on behalf of Chota Haridāsa, He said, "I will never see the face of that person ever again, and if anybody approaches Me to forgive him, then I will go away from this place, because I have nothing to do with such people" Although Śrī Caitanya is supposed to be the most merciful *avatāra*, and very compassionate, He was also very strict. The reason was that if such facility of atonement were given, then people would misuse it.

This path of *bhakti* is to make a person perfect. So, one has to be very, very careful not to commit offenses. Therefore, offenses are explained right in the beginning. If a person comes to render service, why should he keep his pride or be disrespectful? That must be avoided.

In the Catholic religion, they go and confess in the church. Then they again commit sins. The same happens in India with *karmakāṇḍa* (the path of fruitive activities). If people commit some sin, then it recommends that they should go and take bath in the Gaṅgā River or give some charity, and then they will become free from the sin. When people believe that they can counteract their mistake by some atonement, they will never improve.

This point can be compared to an elephant. The elephant has the habit of throwing sand all over himself after he takes a bath in the river. So, one performs a sin, does the atonement, is purified, and



then commits the same mistake again. For this reason atonement is not practiced on the path of devotion.

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**QUESTION:** Offenses cover one's vision of the truth, and the more these offenses are eradicated, the more one is able to see the truth. Does studying *śāstra*, doing *bhajan*, etc., nullify one's offenses?

**ANSWER:** Knowledge is covered by offenses. But once offenses have been made, there is no atonement for them, as there is on the *karma-kāṇḍa* path.

On the *karma-kāṇḍa* path, if one performs a sin, then they can do something to atone for it. But in *bhakti*, there is no atonement. So if one commits an offense, then one falls off the track and loses interest in *bhakti*. The offense will fortify one's ego. One will become self-centered and proud, and then one will disrespect others.

Generally people commit offenses knowingly. They are aware that what they are about to do is an offense, and still they do it. Therefore there is no question of eradicating such offenses. If you are doing such things knowingly, then no amount of atonement will remove the offense.

The guru is the manifestation of God. He gives transcendental knowledge and benefits the disciple. He exists only for the upliftment of his disciples, but still people mistreat or disobey him. It is explained that *guru-avajānā śruti-śāstra-nindanam*, to disobey the guru is *nāma-aparādha*, which is one of the ten offenses. So everybody knows this, but still the guru is treated like an ordinary person. Then tell me what kind of service can remove this offense? There is nothing that can clear it.

Therefore, instead of committing an offense and then trying to clear it away, it is best to carefully avoid the offense in the first place. Knowingly, one should never commit an offense, and it is not difficult to avoid offenses. We want to give importance to our own understanding and our own ego. This becomes the root cause of disrespecting the guru or the *śāstras*. All other problems emanate from offense to guru and *śāstra*. So these two offenses should be carefully avoided.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not forgive Choṭa Haridāsa. This is to show that if a person commits an offense knowingly, there is no forgiveness for that, and he has to suffer for it. It is not that after

committing an offense one can go and chant something or do some activity. On the path of *karma-kāṇḍa*, if you commit a sin or kill somebody, then all you need to do is donate a cow, and that will take away the sin. Therefore, in India, if somebody is dying, they will generally give a cow in donation to counteract the sins of a dying person. Such a facility is not available in *bhakti*, because this would encourage people to commit sins.

*Bhakti* is meant to uplift your consciousness. By atoning, one's consciousness does not get uplifted. Rather it encourages the person to make the same mistake again. They think, "Ok, if I do it, then I can cure the problem by atoning for it." They become fearless. Therefore one should avoid the offense. If somebody can disrespect, then he can also respect. There is no problem. If somebody can disobey, he can also obey. If somebody is sincere and serious, then he should just follow the order. There is no loss.

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**QUESTION:** What is the difference between offense and sin?

**ANSWER:** Sin and offense are like synonyms. One has a greater area of application, and the other is in a limited area. Or one is a general word and the other is applied in a specific sense. Sin basically means to act frivolously or to disobey the instructions in general. Offense is also to act frivolously and to disobey the instructions. In that sense, offense is also a type of sin. But offense is applied in a very specific area. It is an action that directly displeases Bhagavān.

To give an example, in a state there is a constitution and a penal code. Every normal citizen is expected to follow the rules of the state, and if they do not follow, they get punished for breaking the law. If they do not pay the tax, or they steal, or murder, they are penalized. By failing to comply with the law, they commit a sin against the state. Suppose a person is directly serving the king of the state or working within the king's palace. If he disobeys or does something that is displeasing to the king, then that is called an offense.

Therefore, offense is related to the service of Bhagavān, and sin to the general maintenance of society. If one transgresses the religious code, then that is sin. If a person performs an act directly displeasing to Bhagavān, that is an offense. Therefore, offenses are more dangerous, because they are directly displeasing to Bhagavān and are related to His service.

Another distinction is that for sins, there are atonements. If a person commits a sin unknowingly, he can perform atonement and become free from the reaction of that sin. But for offenses there are no atonements. So it is very dangerous to commit an offense.

In *bhakti*, a person makes a resolve that he wants to act for the pleasure of Bhagavān, and he dedicates himself to His service. If he works independently or in a displeasing manner, there is no remedy for that. He acts against his own resolve.

Offense is the main obstacle on the path of devotion, because *bhakti* is that which is done to please Bhagavān, and an offense is that which is displeasing to Bhagavān. Due to offense, practically everybody is kept away from devotion. Most people commit *nāma-aparādha*. This is a blockage to *bhakti*. Therefore, one has to avoid offenses very carefully. *Śāstra* says this again and again: *varjanīyāni prayatnena aparādhāni* (with great endeavor consciously one should avoid offenses).

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**QUESTION:** The tenth offense against the Holy Name states that one should not maintain material attachments. What does this exactly mean? Does this mean that we should not renounce anything but use everything for Kṛṣṇa? I do not understand how this fits together.

**ANSWER:** Offense means to act in a displeasing manner. Amongst all of the offenses, two of them are most important: One is to disobey or disrespect the guru, and the other is not to give respect to *śāstra* (*guror avajānā śruti-śāstra-nindanam*).

Actually, between these two, only one is important and that is disobeying or disrespecting the guru. Disrespecting him means that you see him as a mortal being. You begin to compete with him, and as a result you will develop material conception of him and yourself. You will become attached to your own body and things related to it. Thereby you will commit further offense. However, if you perform *sevā* with the consciousness that the guru is Kṛṣṇa Himself, then there is no material consciousness.

Being absorbed in material objects means that you want to enjoy these things independently, and this is displeasing to Bhagavān. On one side, you are saying, "I am surrendered and everything is for Your service," and on the other side, you are maintaining your own ideas about what you like to enjoy. If such a person chants,

then that is not pleasing to Bhagavān. He becomes displeased and irritated by such a person. Bhagavān thinks, "He says one thing but has another consciousness, and then he is calling My Name." This irritates Bhagavān. That is why it is an offense. Offense means that which is displeasing.

For example, previously in Indian culture it was the etiquette that if one has students or disciples and goes with them in front of one's own guru, then he would not introduce them as his students or his disciples. It would mean that he is competing with the guru and has his own pride as a teacher. We should be humble in front of the guru and not flaunt our own ego.

Offense happens when one has a material concept about the guru. Everything ultimately springs only from this one principle. If one has a material concept about the guru, then everything else just comes out as an offense.

If one works with the idea that the guru is worshipable and should be served for his pleasure in the same way that one serves one's own body, then one does not commit other offenses. Disrespecting the guru is the prime offense.

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**QUESTION:** Could you elaborate more on this third offense of disobeying the guru (*guror avajñā*), because this offense can be direct or indirect?

**ANSWER:** *Avajñā* means to disrespect, which means to not value, revere, or accept that the guru is superior; or to consider oneself as superior to the guru and one's own existence as more important than the guru's. Consequently, this kind of mentality will reflect in one's actions, whether that is direct or indirect. Once you believe that the guru is not superior to you, then you will disobey him, because you will think, "He does not know," "I know better," or "He cannot make decisions." This is how the above said consciousness will translate. The root cause of this consciousness is again the same, to consider the guru as a material person. As soon as you consider the guru a material person, you will think, "He is not perfect," "He is in ignorance," "I know better," or "Why does he have to be respected?" All these thoughts will come, and then you will disobey him. *Guror avajñā* basically means disrespect and disobeying his order.

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**QUESTION:** How to become more discriminative about this first offense of not criticizing Vaiṣṇavas? What is the difference between criticizing Vaiṣṇavas and knowing that devotees are doing something wrong? For example, if somebody does not have a proper concept, but he is still on the path, we do not follow him, but if we do not want to follow him, we have to criticize his concept.

**ANSWER:** Criticism is a type of hatred. When you have feelings of hatred, then you criticize, which, ultimately, means you want to destroy that particular person. There is a difference between knowing what is right and wrong [discrimination] and criticism. The difference is based upon the difference in our purpose. The purpose of criticism is hatred or dislike, and you want to do away with that person. The purpose of knowing the defects of something is that you want to accept the right thing. This type of criticism is not considered as criticism, because your purpose is not to criticize but to accept what is right and follow that.

The difference is in your intention. If your intention is to know what is right, and for that reason you have to know what is wrong, then that is not criticism. But if your intention is something else, then that is criticism. There is clean water and there is dirty water. To know that this is clean water and that is dirty water is not criticism, because your purpose is to drink the clean water and leave the dirty water. However, if your intention is that you want to destroy the dirty water and you are not interested in drinking pure water, then that is criticism.

Mainly the ācāryas, or the teachers, have to pinpoint what is wrong and what is right because they have to establish the real thing. For that, they would criticize. Such criticism is not for the sake of criticism, but to establish and show the right way. Otherwise, their followers will not know what is right and what is wrong.

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**QUESTION:** When a devotee becomes very critical of another devotee, is that a reflection of violence in his nature or a sign that one is not engaged in service?

**ANSWER:** It is a result of ignorance, material pride, and absorption in sense objects. It is not related to *bhakti*. Due to maintaining a material frame of mind, a person sees defects in others, finds faults, and takes pleasure in criticizing.

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**QUESTION:** Can you explain more about offense in deity worship, *sevā-aparādha*?

**ANSWER:** If you want to know that in detail, then you have to study the 32 offenses that are listed in *Varāha Purāṇa* and are cited in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and also in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Some of these offenses are: talking loudly, gossiping in front of the deity, removing *tulasī* from Bhagavān's feet on *Dvādaśī* or picking *tulasī* from the *tulasī* plant on *Dvādaśī*, worshipping in an unclean state, passing wind during *pūjā*, etc.

You have to avoid *sevā-aparādha* along with *nāma-aparādha*, which are ten in total. Disobeying the spiritual master and criticizing the scriptural injunctions are the major offenses against the Name.

## 74. Pañca-tattva

**QUESTION:** What do the individual personalities of the *Pañca-tattva* stand for?

**ANSWER:** Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Nityānanda is Saṅkarṣaṇa and Advaita is Mahāviṣṇu. Both are manifestations of Kṛṣṇa in the material world. When one worships them and prays to them, one becomes purified of one's material existence. Material existence means one's material identification.

Śrīvāsa Thākura is a devotee of Bhagavān, and by worshipping him, one gets the mercy of the devotees. Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī is the śakti of Bhagavān, and by worshipping him, one first attains Bhagavān's śakti and then Mahāprabhu, Bhagavān Himself.

For *vraja-bhakti* one has to be purified. When the existence is purified through Nityānanda and Advaita, then by the mercy of Śrīvāsa, one is able to grasp and understand *bhakti*, and finally one is able to execute it by the mercy of Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

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**QUESTION:** Could Mahārāja explain the meaning of this verse:

*pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam  
bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam  
bhaktāvatāram bhaktākhyam  
namāmi bhakta-śaktikam*

ANSWER: Kṛṣṇa appears in these five forms: *Bhakta-rūpa* is Mahāprabhu Himself, *svarūpa* is Nityānanda, *bhaktāvatāra* is Advaita Prabhu, *śakti* is Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, and *bhakta* is Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. This is given in the beginning of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* (CC Adi 1.14 and 7.6)

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QUESTION: Once I heard that Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura is Nārada Muni and Prahlāda Mahārāja in one incarnation. Is that true?

ANSWER: Caitanya Mahāprabhu is *Svayaṁ Bhagavān*, and when He comes, then all the other *avatāras* and their associates also come with Him. Mahāprabhu gives the chance for everyone to taste devotion together with Him. Therefore, it is natural that His different associates come.

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QUESTION: Mahārāja explained in one *darśana* about Pañca-tattva that Nityānanda is Saṅkarṣaṇa and Advaita Ācārya is Mahāviṣṇu, and that they purify our existence. Could he explain it more?

ANSWER: Saṅkarṣaṇa and Mahāviṣṇu are the presiding masters of the elements of material nature. They create through material nature. Our body is also composed of material elements, beginning with *prakṛti*, *maḥat-tattva*, and then *aḥaṅkāra*. By their grace, these elements become purified, so that they are fit to be used in the service of Bhagavān. That is the meaning of purification. They are worshiped or prayed to so that they can bless us in order that we become qualified to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is called *bhūta-suddhi*.

QUESTION: Could you explain more about how it is that through the mercy of the devotee, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, one receives the *śakti*, and through *śakti* one attains Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: The essence of *uttama-bhakti* is to follow and not act independently. So it is done in the mood of following the guru. Kṛṣṇa is not just Kṛṣṇa Himself, He manifests as His potency (Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī), His devotee (Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura), and the presiding persons of the material nature (Advaita Ācārya and Nityānanda Prabhu). When one offers devotion to Kṛṣṇa that is pleasing to Him, one is also offering devotion to all of them. Therefore, they are all present in the Pañca-tattva.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said that the worship of His devotee is better than His own worship. Nobody can approach Kṛṣṇa directly. There are other paths, like that of *jñāna*, *karma*, and even different types of *bhakti*, where there is *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and so on. But this process of *uttama-bhakti* is totally different from those paths. And the way to attain it is to follow. There is absolutely no independence. If one wants to maintain other motives, then he cannot practice *uttama-bhakti*. *Śraddhā* makes a person qualified to attain *uttama-bhakti*. There is no other qualification needed. If one does not have *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, then he will have *śraddhā* in something else. But once one has *śāstrīya-śraddhā* in *bhakti*, then he does not need anything else. This is not just a spiritual process, but also practical in the material world. All the problems in the material world come because of one's own separatist mentality. When you have your own separate mentality, then you have separate desires, separate goals, separate plans, etc. They are bound to clash with the desire of others, and this is when problems arise.

In *uttama-bhakti* there is coherence and harmony. This is possible only if one is surrendered to a pure devotee, because the devotee is trying to serve Kṛṣṇa. He understands Kṛṣṇa, who is manifest in all the creation. This will bring complete harmony. This is the meaning of having a *bhakta* in the *Pañca-tattva*.

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**QUESTION:** Should our attitude be more like Gaura-Nitāi or more like Gadādhara-Gaura?

**ANSWER:** Whichever name you like to chant, chant that. There is no such thing that you have to show one as inferior and the other as superior. These five forms are all manifestations of Mahāprabhu Himself. Sometimes people try to disparage one form. That is not proper. The *Pañca-tattva* includes all of them. Worship whomever you like.

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**QUESTION:** What is the difference between the worship of Gaura-Nitāi and Gadādhara-Gaura?

**ANSWER:** God is one, but He is worshiped according to the *bhāva* of the devotee. *Smārtas*, for example are doing *pañcopāsanā*, or the worship of five *devas*. You should not even disrespect these *devas*,



what to speak of Gaura-Nitāi or other forms of Bhagavān. In any case, you should not disrespect anyone [neither any worshiper nor any form of Bhagavān].

## 75. Param-gurudeva

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain something about his guru, our *param-gurudeva*?

ANSWER: He (Vinod Bihari Gosvāmī Mahārāja) was born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and had all good qualities that a *brāhmaṇa* is supposed to have. He was a great scholar. During his period in Vraja, there was nobody as scholarly as he. He was firmly fixed in devotion and very simple and straightforward in his dealings. He had no desire to cheat anybody, even in daily life. He was very respectful even to people younger than him or those born in a lower class. He never had any desire for worship or honor for himself or any interest in criticizing others, not even in his thoughts. The qualities of devotees that we read or hear about naturally existed in him. He did not obtain these qualities by practice, for he was naturally like that. He had no desire for wealth, honor, respect, worship, or followers, and had no cheating propensity.

These were his qualities, and he would always say that there is no need to criticize others. He used to say, "Other people are doing something, you see them, but there is no need to criticize them." During his time, there were many people living in Bhāgavata Nivāsa, who would use techniques to influence people. They would externally show renunciation. *Param-gurudeva* was not that type. He said, "Let them behave the way they like, we are not interested in such things." He was always very transparent. He would not hide anything.

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QUESTION: How did *param-gurujī* meet Paṇḍita Bābā?

ANSWER: *Param-gurudeva* came to Vrindavan in his mid-age after leaving his family life and handing over his responsibilities to his son. That means he came here without his wife. He heard about Paṇḍita Bābā, who was very famous in those days and who used to live in different places in Vraja. Then Paṇḍita Bābā got the

place called Dauji Garden [where Śāstrī jī Mahārāja met him], the present site of Vrindavan Research Institute. [Mahārāja purchased this present *gośālā* and temple at Kalidaha later on.] Mahārāja was living with *param-gurudeva* behind the temple where now there is a garden and a few rooms. However, Mahārāja was living earlier with Paṇḍita Bābā at the location of the Vrindavan Research Institute. When Mahārāja first came to Vrindavan, he met Paṇḍita Bābā who was living at Dauji Garden. Paṇḍita Bābā and others thought about who should initiate Mahārāja.

At that time, *param-gurudeva* was traveling in Vraja towards Govardhana. After he came back and went to see Paṇḍita Bābā, the latter told him, "This boy is waiting for you." So that is how Mahārāja came here to Kalidaha. First *param-gurudeva* gave him *harināma-dīkṣā*, and then later on *mantra-dīkṣā*. After a long time he also gave *veṣa*. So this was the place where Mahārāja lived with his guru, the two rooms behind the temple. The room where we keep the *bhūṣā* (dry chaff for the cows) was built by *param-gurudeva* for his deities, which were installed by him. And those rooms on the other side, where they used to live, were built by one of his disciples. All this property belonged to the Madana-mohana temple. In those days they used to take it on lease. This is how he got the place.

QUESTION: Were your deities (Gaura-Gadādhara and Rādhā-Govindadeva) installed by *param-gurudeva*?

ANSWER: Yes. Previously they were in that place [where the *bhūṣā* is stored now], and later on Mahārāja built this [present] temple.

QUESTION: Would you ever consider going to the West?

ANSWER: I do not want to go outside the gate.

QUESTION: Mahārāja is saying that the line of Mahāprabhu is deteriorating. Does that mean it will end someday or is there help?

ANSWER: It is up to you.

QUESTION: They say something like 10,000 years?

ANSWER: Anything will become lost if there are no longer people who want to preserve it. That is also applicable for Mahāprabhu's teachings. It is an education, and if people do not study it, then it will be lost. You can make a business from it, and then it will remain in name only. If there is no one who is truly practicing it, then it is lost. Where is the place where you can study it now? It is an

education, so it has to be studied, which means studying the *śāstra*. If you do not study and practice it, and if there is no teacher who is devoted to it, then it [the line, the philosophy] deviates. Hence you can see that this is already happening.

## 76. Paramparā

QUESTION: What is the difference between *sampradāya* and *parivāra*?

ANSWER: *Sampradāya* is the general term, like Gaudīya *Sampradāya*, and *parivāra* is a specific branch or line in this *sampradāya*.

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QUESTION: There are different lineages of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, such as the Rādhā Kuṇḍa *bābājīs*, Gaudīya Maṭha, and your line. Are they all transmitting *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* equally?

ANSWER: You have to analyze this by comparing the time when the *sampradāya* was started with today's time. When it was started, the purpose was according to *nivṛtti-mārga*, which means spiritual, following devotion according to *śāstra*. To understand this point, you have to see whether people are actually following *nivṛtti-mārga* or *pravṛtti-mārga*.

When Śrī Caitanya started this movement, He specifically appointed Paṇḍita Gosvāmī (Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī) to give *dīkṣā*. Mahāprabhu personally gave him the deity to worship and the responsibility to teach *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Mahāprabhu used to hear *Bhāgavatam* from Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, just to set the standard. Therefore, originally Paṇḍita Gosvāmī initiated all the Gosvāmīs and even other devotees. The temples in Vrindavan or Rādhā Kuṇḍa were made by the Gosvāmīs, and they were disciples of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. Rādhā Kuṇḍa originally belonged to Dāsa Gosvāmī (Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī), and he also came in the line of Gadādhara Paṇḍita.

This era lasted only for a short period. It always happens like that—not only in our *sampradāya*, but also in every other *sampradāya*. Originally, a movement is started by a great person and after one or two generations, *nivṛtti* turns into *pravṛtti*. People make a living out of the philosophy. Then everybody starts giving *dīkṣā*. You have to see whether these gurus have actually studied *śāstra*. Do they really

know *śāstra*, and do they follow it and also the Gosvāmīs? By this, you will know the answer to your question.

Originally, this path of *uttama-bhakti* was *ācaraṇa pradhāna*, which means following rigidly. However, now there is only *pravacana* (talking) and no *ācaraṇa* (following), because the purpose has changed. Originally, the people were sincere, and the purpose was sincere interest in devotion to God. But now the purpose has shifted to money and followers. This happens when you change the focus from scripture to a person, when the person is given importance over *śāstra*. Then the person propagates according to his mind, and he needs money. So everything will, ultimately, be geared towards money and sense gratification.

You need to check as to whether or not a particular guru is following *śāstra*. Is he following the original literature and principles of the Gosvāmīs? Is there any *paramparā* or tradition to teach *śāstra*? This has to be checked.

QUESTION: So, if somebody is following *nivṛtti-mārga* and reading and following the words of the Gosvāmīs, then it wouldn't matter if such a person was located in the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the Rādhā Kuṇḍa *bābājī* group, a Gosvāmī, or in your line?

ANSWER: If they were following the *śāstra* properly, it would not matter.

QUESTION: Then it does not matter?

ANSWER: It does not matter, but the point is how will one follow it, if one does not come in an authorized line?

QUESTION: Is that what Mahārāja said?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Can you ask him that specifically?

ANSWER: If a person is following *śāstra*, then it does not matter, but he must follow *śāstra* properly, and not his own mind. Then naturally he must be coming in a proper line, because that is what line means. Wherever he is, that does not matter.

QUESTION: In other words, you are basically saying that your line is the only genuine line?



ANSWER: What I am saying is that if somebody is coming in the line of Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, and he is following His teachings and the *śāstra*, then that is in a genuine line. However, one is not necessarily a follower of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī just because one is coming in Paṇḍita Gosvāmī's line. If one does not follow the teachings properly, then he is not genuine. The main point is to follow the teaching properly.

Another point you need to understand is that I am not denying that other lines exist. I am saying that Mahāprabhu only appointed Paṇḍita Gosvāmī to give *dīkṣā*. But others also gave *dīkṣā* and propagated their line. Mahāprabhu did not forbid them. Just like He appointed Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs to write books, discover the places related to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and establish temples. He did not say that others should not do these things.

QUESTION: Given that Gadādhara Paṇḍita initiated all of the lines, then everybody could say that they are coming from Gadādhara Paṇḍita.

ANSWER: They do not say that, because they do not accept it. Then where is the question of following him? You go to Gaudīya Maṭha, and they also do not say that they are coming in Gadādhara Paṇḍita's line. Or if you go to the Gosvāmīs, they also do not say it.

Yet, there is mention in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* itself that the associates of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī are the chief *bhāgavatas*:

*paṇḍitera gana saba—bhāgavata dhanya  
prāṇa-vallabha—sabāra śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya*

"All the followers of Gadādhara Paṇḍita are considered great devotees because they have Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as their life and soul." (BBT CC Adī 12.90)

Once upon a time, only Paṇḍita Gosvāmī's *parivāra* was prominent in Vrindavan. Śrī Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has written in one of his songs that the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana are followers of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. He also writes that he belongs to the family of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

QUESTION: But in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, or at least in one of Rūpa Gosvāmī's works, he says that even Vallabha is a genuine Vaiṣṇava.

ANSWER: However, his descendants do not accept that. Thus, they are not following Śrī Vallabha in that respect. You can check

it yourself. Followers of Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī originally established all of the Gosvāmī's temples in Vrindavan. There is a record of that, but now they do not talk about it.

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**QUESTION:** Is there more information about Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī?

**ANSWER:** Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī was the uncle of Lokanātha Gosvāmī. The temple of Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī was opposite to the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, but later it was sold, and today the deities are on the altar of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. The *samādhi* of Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī is next to the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī.

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**QUESTION:** Where and from whom did Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī take initiation?

**ANSWER:** They took initiation from Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī in Purī. They also studied *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from him, and Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī tested if they had understood it.

**QUESTION:** Who was the *dīkṣā-guru* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

**ANSWER:** Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī. Yadunandana Ācārya was only the family priest.

**QUESTION:** Who was the *dīkṣā-guru* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī?

**ANSWER:** He took *dīkṣā* from Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.

**QUESTION:** Who was the *dīkṣā-guru* of Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī?

**ANSWER:** He took *dīkṣā* from Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

**QUESTION:** Who is the *dīkṣā-guru* of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī?

**ANSWER:** Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

QUESTION: Who is the *dīkṣā-guru* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī?

ANSWER: Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, although people do not accept it nowadays. Previously people did not talk about their guru. Therefore, today it is difficult to prove this fact historically. Originally all the temples of the Gosvāmīs were managed and served by followers (disciples or grand disciples) of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. But over time, things have degraded, and the true knowledge has been forgotten.

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QUESTION: Who is the *dīkṣā-guru* of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Svāmī?

ANSWER: Radha Dāmodara Dāsa.

QUESTION: Who is the *dīkṣā-guru* of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura?

ANSWER: Rādhā Ramana.

\*

QUESTION: Paṇḍita Gosvāmī was a *brāhmaṇa*, but wasn't his guru, Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi, a *vaiśya*?

ANSWER: No. Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi was a *brāhmaṇa*. The title "Vidyānidhi" in his name is a title for *brāhmaṇas*, meaning "the storehouse of knowledge." In those days, there was no question of being initiated by a non-*brāhmaṇa*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu authorized only Paṇḍita Gosvāmī to initiate people. All Vaiṣṇavas at that time took initiation from him. Later on, however, this changed.

QUESTION: Whom else did Mahāprabhu authorize to give initiation, beside Paṇḍita Gosvāmī?

ANSWER: Nobody except Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. Mahāprabhu authorized only Paṇḍita Gosvāmī to initiate, to establish the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and to teach *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He even gave His own deity to him and used to hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from him. Paṇḍita Gosvāmī initiated even Acyutānanda, the son of Advaita Ācārya.

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**QUESTION:** Which *bhāva* does Advaita Ācārya have and does his line still exist?

**ANSWER:** Neither the line of Advaita Ācārya nor of Nityānanda Prabhu were directly sanctioned by Śrīmān Mahāprabhu. He did not order them to initiate. But He also did not forbid them. Later the lines of Advaita Ācārya and Nityānanda Prabhu came into existence. They had different *tilaka* markings. In the beginning, all Vaiṣṇavas had the same *tilaka*, because they all were in the line of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. Now the line of Rādhā-Ramaṇa has their own *tilaka*, and so has the line of Advaita Ācārya and Nityānanda. At present, hardly anybody is wearing the original *tilaka*. During the time of the Gosvāmīs all the main temples in Vrindavan were managed only by disciples or grand disciples of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

[SND comments]: Out of respect we do not say “Gadādhara Paṇḍit,” rather we say “Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.” In Vedic culture we do not mention the names of respected people. In the same way, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is referred to as “Dāsa Gosvāmī,” Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura as “Ṭhākura Mahāśaya,” Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, as “Kavirāja Gosvāmī,” and so on.

Paṇḍita Gosvāmī is mentioned in some verses of Caitanya *Caritāmṛta*:

*baḍa śākhā—gadādhara paṇḍita-gosāṇi*  
*teṅho lakṣmī-rūpā, tānra sama keha nāi*

“Paṇḍita Gosvāmī was a big branch of the tree of Mahāprabhu, he is considered the fourth branch, he is a form of Lakṣmī, and nobody is equal to him.” (CC Adi 10.13<sup>4</sup>)

Also, in Adi 12.79 it is said that amongst all the branches, the branch of Gadādhara Paṇḍita is the most important and best (*mahottama*).

Further, Adi 12.88: “The eleventh branch of Gadādhara Gosvāmī was Bhūgarbha, and the twelfth was Bhāgavata dāsa. Both of them went to Vrindavan and resided there for life.”

Adi 12.90: “All the followers of Gadādhara Paṇḍita are considered great devotees because they have Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as their life and soul.”

<sup>4</sup> In the BBT edition it is CC Adi 10.15



Antya 7.163: “No one can describe the characteristics and ecstatic love of Gadādhara Paṇḍita. Therefore, another name for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Gadādhara-prāṇanātha, the life and soul of Gadādhara Paṇḍita.”

Antya 7.164: “No one can say how merciful Mahāprabhu is to Gadādhara Paṇḍita, but people know Mahāprabhu as Gadāira Gaura—the Śrī Gaurāṅga of Gadādhara Paṇḍita.”

Antya 7.166: “Gadādhara Paṇḍita is celebrated all over the world for his gentle behavior, his brahminical attributes, and his steady love for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

## 77. Paricaryā (Worship)

**QUESTION:** We worship Giridhārī, and now we also want to put a photo of your deities on our altar. Should we worship the picture too, or just keep it there?

**ANSWER:** You can worship them.

In our *sampradāya* there is no worship (*pūjā*) but *sevā*. There is a difference between *pūjā* and *sevā*. *Pūjā* is done in the other *sampradāyas* like the Rāmānuja or Madhva *sampradāyas*. *Pūjā* means that you offer something by chanting *mantras*. You chant a particular *mantra*, and then you offer some article to the deity. There is no stress given on doing favorable service, whereas in *uttama-bhakti*, it is *sevā*, which means to serve in a loving manner. The Rāmānuja and Madhva *sampradāyas* follow the *varṇāśrama* system and the *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi*, which means that the person has to be qualified, born in the *varṇāśrama* system, a *brāhmaṇa*, and so on. They chant *mantras* and offer articles to the deity.

In *uttama-bhakti*, you accept Īśvara in a loving manner. There is a relationship, and you render service that is pleasing, and you offer articles to Him, accordingly. Whatever type of relationship and level of love you now have for Kṛṣṇa is what you will have in the spiritual world. By doing *pūjā*, you will not get *uttama-bhakti*. Therefore the word *sevā* or *paricaryā* is used in *uttama-bhakti*.

In *pūjā* there is no relationship of affection, but in *sevā* there is a relationship. Right from the time of *dīkṣā*, one accepts Īśvara, and Īśvara also accepts the devotee, and then the service starts. When

one gets the mercy of Īśvara, one gets love for Him, and then one loses interest in bodily attachment. The body is only food for dogs and jackals.

In other *sampradāyas*, they do *mudrā* (making certain gestures with the hands), *āmantrana* (inviting the deity), and *visarjana* (sending away the deity): They invite the deity and worship Him by chanting *mantras*. They follow the process according to the *vidhi*, and when it is over, then they send the deity off. Their job is done.

However, in *uttama-bhakti* there is an eternal relationship. There is no question of inviting and then sending the deity off. You offer articles in love and affection. You treat Īśvara like a member of your family. This is the difference between *pūjā* and *paricaryā*.

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the word *paricaryā*?

ANSWER: *Sevā*, service.

QUESTION: Is it mostly the consciousness that is different?

ANSWER: That is the basic difference.

QUESTION: Is the worship of Gadādhara-Gaura the same as the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the worship of Gaura-Nitāi in *sakhyā-rasa*?

ANSWER: They are worshiped as you worship any other deity. Worship means you are servant and they are master. This is the mood in which you worship.

QUESTION: What is the difference between how we worship Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana and how we worship Him in His deity form? How can we get from one kind of mood to another kind of mood?

ANSWER: Service, basically, means to act favorably, and that is the essence of *bhāva*, or love. Kṛṣṇa is to be worshiped as an object of *bhāva* and not as God, because He is the focus of love.

One has to follow in the footsteps of the guru, render service in this mood by following him, but not by imitating him. Consciousness is the dearest thing in this body. As soon as consciousness leaves, the body has no importance anymore. It is thrown away. There is no education needed for this; it is natural. One should have similar sentiments for Bhagavān while following the guru.

We call Him God, and we follow rules and regulations, so that we do not disrespect Him due to our material habits or material *saṁskāras*. Other people may not understand our behavior properly. They may think, "If this is not God, then why is he worshipping Him?" Since everybody says that Kṛṣṇa is God and they worship God, we also say it, but our worship is not in reverence but as our beloved. If He is to be worshiped as Īśvara, then He is the protector and you are the protected. This means that He has to do some service to you, and such a feeling creates distance between Īśvara and us. There is no feeling of *ātmiyatā* or "my own," "He is my lover," "I love Him," or "I have to perform favorable service." Instead, I expect something from Him, thinking that He should give me something, protect me, take care of me, or supply whatever I am lacking. He should fulfill my desires. All these feelings come when He is Īśvara, but if

He is not Īśvara, rather our own beloved, then we do not demand anything from Him. We just engage in His loving service.

We follow rules and regulations, because we have a material body, which has certain deficiencies. If we do not follow rules, then we will become slack, lethargic, lazy, and unclean in our habits. Whatever *bhāva* we have here, that is the *bhāva* we will have after death. God is always present. He has not gone anywhere. The great devotees of Bhagavān see Him performing His pastimes. It is just like a play behind a curtain. When the curtain is dropped, the players are still there. They have not gone away. They are doing the same play behind the curtain. Sometimes the curtain is removed and then everybody can see the play. At other times the curtain is dropped, and then only a few see it. In the same way, Bhagavān comes and performs His *līlā* at a particular time, as in Dvāpara-yuga. Then everybody can see it, but at other times, He makes Himself invisible to the common man. The *bhāva*, or mood of devotion, that we acquire now, will remain with us when we enter into His pastimes. There will be no difference.

The service here has to be performed in the mood of following the instructions of the guru. We do not worship Īśvara as Īśvara although that is definitely how He is called. If you treat Him like Īśvara, then there is no love. When He is sitting on the throne, then instead of performing loving service to Him, you will demand something from Him because of His *aiśvarya* mood.

QUESTION: When, where, and how did Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship start?

ANSWER: The worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa started with Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Īśvara propagates worship according to the qualification, trust, and interest of the people. In other yugas, there was no misuse of worship, like nowadays, where people worship for business or to maintain themselves and their families.

In Mathurā and Dvārakā, they worship Rukminī-Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is a *kṣatriya*, because they cannot accept that God is a cowherd. In their eyes, God has to be a *brāhmaṇa* or at least a *kṣatriya*.

In other *sampradāyas*, there is no worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. It became known only by the efforts of the Six Gosvāmīs. Jīva Gosvāmī even wrote a book on it: *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-arcana-paddhati*.

The worship of Rādhā-Vallabha together, as practiced by the followers of Hita Harivaṁśa Gosvāmī, is not in the mood of Vraja, because they consider Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to be married.

QUESTION: Who installed all the Rādhā mūrtis? Is it true, that it was Jāhnavā Mātā, the wife of Nityānanda?

ANSWER: That is not true. It is a historical fact that the first Rādhā mūrti was sent by Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī from Orissa to Rūpa Gosvāmī in Vrindavan for his Rādhā-Govinda temple.

QUESTION: How is it possible that first Rādhā-Govinda was worshiped by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, but later in Jaipur the Rāmānuja followers did not want them to continue until Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana Svāmī presented the *Govinda Bhāṣya* commentary to the *Vedānta-sūtra*?

ANSWER: The worship of Rādhā-Govinda did start here in Vrindavan. It was initiated by the followers of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. However, when the deities were shifted to Jaipur, they were worshipped in the palace of the king. The Rāmānuja followers influenced the king and protested against the worship of Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa. Then this controversy started.

In *uttama-bhakti* the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is the *pañcama-puruṣārtha*, but nobody knows what *uttama-bhakti* means.

Even the Māyāvādīs have Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples, recite *Bhāgavata-saptāha*, speak on *rāsa-līlā*, etc. They do not even accept God as a person, so what is the use of their worship?

QUESTION: If Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana does not wear a *brāhmaṇa* thread (*upavīta*), should we offer it to Him during *pūjā*?



ANSWER: It is not offered.

QUESTION: But *tilaka* is offered to Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: Yes. In the Vedic system everybody used to wear *tilaka*.

QUESTION: Should we offer *upavīta* to Śrī Caitanya?

ANSWER: Yes, because He is not worshiped as a *sannyāsī*. *Sannyāsīs* give up the *upavīta*.

QUESTION: What about offering this silk *pavitra* to Kṛṣṇa on a particular day, as I have seen in South India?

ANSWER: It is offered on Dvādaśī in the month of Śravaṇa, in the bright fortnight, which is also the disappearance day of Rūpa Gosvāmī. In the evening time after the noon offering, a silk *pavitra* is offered to Kṛṣṇa. This is done to eliminate all the *sevā-aparādhās* (the offenses to the deity), which may have been done in His service, knowingly or unknowingly. Such an offering is done only on one day a year.

QUESTION: On Ekādaśī should one offer *prasāda* to the guru even when he is fasting?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: I have heard that one should offer actually everything before using it for oneself, including new clothes. How is this actually to be done?

ANSWER: Just touch it to the feet of the deities.

QUESTION: So they should be presented to the deity?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: The other day, in the *Sandarbha* it was also mentioned that one should also offer medicine. What if there are impure substances in it, like alcohol?

ANSWER: Everything is offered, because there is no independence. A Vaiṣṇava is always like that. Even one's own mind, body, residence, and everything else are offered to Bhagavān.

QUESTION: Should those things be offered mentally? Is it like a consciousness then?

ANSWER: You offer those things in the same way as you offer water before you drink it.

QUESTION: When one has both, deities and *śālagrāma-śilā*, is it right to bathe only the *śālagrāma*?

ANSWER: No, if one has deities and *śālagrāma*, one has to serve both of them.

QUESTION: Can one also see Pañcatattva in *śālagrāma-śilā*?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What *mantra* should be used in that worship?

ANSWER: In that case, the *śilā* should be worshiped with the *mantras* of all five personalities.

QUESTION: What are the different outfit colors the deities have during the week?

ANSWER: There are different systems. The choice can be made according to the liking of the worshiper. One can choose different colors. On Thursdays and birthdays (appearance day of Bhagavān), the color is yellow. On Saturdays and new moon days, the color is black. Wednesdays green, and on Sundays it is red. On Mondays, Fridays, and full moon days the deities wear white. On Tuesday it is maroon. This is just a general outline. You can also do it according to your personal liking.

QUESTION: Which color do they wear on Ekādaśī?

ANSWER: Whichever color you like.

QUESTION: Does Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wear *tilaka*?

ANSWER: She wears *tilaka*, but it is of a different type.

QUESTION: Should we apply it to Her when we are worshipping Her?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What is the meaning of *ācamana*?

ANSWER: It is just for washing the mouth.

QUESTION: And *punar-ācamana*?

ANSWER: *Punar* means again.

QUESTION: What is *bhūta-śuddhi* (purification of existence) and its relevance in *pūjā* and *japa* for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas?

ANSWER: *Bhūta-śuddhi* is necessary when you worship Bhagavān, who is transcendental. Our body is made of the five material elements. Therefore, there is a need to purify the body. The rule is *nādevo devam arcayet*, one who is not a *deva* cannot worship the *devas*. It means to worship the divine person, one must also be divine; not that the worshipper is material and Bhagavān is spiritual. Both must be on the same platform.

The process of purification involves chanting *mantras* or doing *nyāsas* (placing *mantras* on one's own body by reciting them and touching a specific part of the body). But in our spiritual process of *bhakti*, this is done by surrender. *Mām madiyaṁ samarpayāmi* ("when a person surrenders, he becomes purified and qualified for worship").

*Bhūta-śuddhi* is, basically, for *upāsana* or *arcanā*. The *smārta* process is different. You have to do certain things, like *nyāsa*, etc., and then you become purified. In *bhakti-mārga*, you have to surrender to the guru, and once you take shelter of him, then you become purified and qualified for *upāsana*.

QUESTION: Before we perform worship, do we need to develop a particular consciousness and for that purpose does one have to enter *bhūta-śuddhi*?

ANSWER: Once you surrender to the guru, you are purified. You do not have to do it again and again. That is a resolve you take once.

QUESTION: And chanting this verse, *nāhaṁ vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro* (CC Madhya 13.80), is that considered as our *bhūta-śuddhi*?

ANSWER: It means the same thing. Whether you chant it or not, it does not matter. Once you have surrendered, you are surrendered with or without chanting it. The consciousness of being a servant is the meaning of surrender. *Bhūta-śuddhi* is not some mechanical process like in the *smārta* system, where they remain independent.

Here in *bhakti-mārga*, there is no independent existence. If you want to worship Bhagavān, you have to worship Him by becoming His person. You have to come under His fold; that is *bhūta-śuddhi*. And that is the meaning of the word *upāsana* ("coming close").

QUESTION: What is the significance of *svasti-vacanam*, invocation of auspiciousness, in *pūjā*? Is it done in *bhakti-mārga* at all?

ANSWER: That is according to the *smārta* process (the principles based on *dharma śāstra* that are followed by the adherents of the *varṇāśrama* system). When the devotee is surrendered to Bhagavān, there is no separate *svasti* needed.

QUESTION: Since tomorrow is the birthday of Śrī Nityānanda and we have Nityānanda in our house, what is the best way to celebrate His appearance day?

ANSWER: You should do *abhiṣeka* for Him.

QUESTION: With these five ingredients?

ANSWER: Yes, with milk, etc. (*Pañcāmṛta*: milk, yogurt, ghee, honey, and water with sugar).

QUESTION: I have heard that the path of devotional service is called *sāttvika-tantra*, like *Pañcarātra*. What does *sāttvika-tantra* actually mean?

ANSWER: The division of the *tantra* is according to the worshipable deity. In the material world, everything is a product of material nature, which has three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Every person's nature is dominated by one of these *guṇas*. Somebody has a *sāttvika* nature, somebody a *rājasika*, and somebody a *tāmasika* nature. But the *guṇas* are always mixed. It is not that those who are in *sattva* are always in *sattva*. *Sattva* is also mixed with the other two *guṇas*. But one *guṇa* is prominent in one's nature. One's taste is different because of one's predominant nature and the characteristics that come out of it. According to one's taste, one has a liking for a particular deity and *śraddhā* (faith) in that. Nobody can live without *śraddhā* in something.

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya  
śraddhā bhavati bhārata  
śraddhā-mayo 'yaṁ puruṣo  
yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*



“Everyone’s faith is according to one’s disposition of heart, O descendant of Bharata. A person is made of faith. Therefore, one functions according to it.” (Gītā 17.3)

Somebody has *śraddhā* in *sāttvika* deities, somebody in *rājasika*, and somebody in *tāmasika* deities. Some people worship Viṣṇu, some people even worship ghosts, while others worship other supreme beings, trees, nature, or something else. Everybody has *śraddhā* in something. To regulate that and to give shelter to every person, God gives *śāstra*; otherwise people would just follow their own whimsical thoughts and be lost. According to their *śraddhā*, people follow certain processes, which they like because of their particular nature. Therefore, there are different descriptions of deities in *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa*, and *tamo-guṇa*. Correspondingly, there is a *śāstra* for each, so that one can follow and worship.

*Sāttvika-tantra* is dealing with the worship of Śrī Viṣṇu. It gives the details as to how the worship has to be done, the qualifications of the worshipper, and how the raw materials for the worship are to be acquired.

QUESTION: How are we to follow *sāttvika-tantra*, if we do not have a deity to worship, feed, and so forth?

ANSWER: You have to have one deity.

QUESTION: So we can have one?

ANSWER: If you want to follow.

QUESTION: Does that have to come from the guru?

ANSWER: Obviously, you take it with the permission of the guru. If you want to follow, you have to follow the guru, as that is what *śāstra* says.

QUESTION: So if we have a desire to worship, then we should approach the guru, and ask him if we can worship a deity?

ANSWER: If you have a guru, then you follow what the guru says, as this is not a whimsical process.

QUESTION: *Tantra* also includes *mantra*, not just deity worship?

ANSWER: Yes, so many things.

**QUESTION:** You worship Hanumān every day. Can you explain how we should think of Hanumān?

**ANSWER:** Bhagavān says that the worship of His devotee is more than His own worship. Hanumān is a great devotee, and an example of a devotee who is very fixed in his service. Bhagavān Himself says, "My devotees control Me by devotion just as a chaste wife controls a chaste husband" (SB 9.4.66). That is possible because the devotee is not deviant. He is always one-pointed and fixed in his service, like Hanumān. So he controls Bhagavān, and if one worships the devotee, then Bhagavān is pleased. Bhagavān is not so pleased if one does service directly to Him, but if one does service to the devotee, then He is very much pleased.

Therefore, the scriptures say that if we do favorable activities to movable or even unmovable living entities in this world with the consciousness that Īśvara is in each of them, then that is very pleasing to Him.

*evam kṛṣṇātma-nātheṣu  
manuṣyeṣu ca sauhydam  
paricaryām cobhayatra  
mahatsu nṛṣu sādhuṣu*

"One who desires his ultimate self-interest should cultivate friendship with those persons who have accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Master of their life. One should further develop an attitude of service toward all living beings. One should especially try to help those in the human form of life and, among them, especially those who accept the principles of religious behavior. Among religious persons, one should especially render service to the pure devotees of Bhagavān." (SB 11.3.29)

Therefore, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam gives a list of various grades of living beings, so that we can understand how Īśvara is manifest in the different species. The devotees are the topmost on this list. Hanumān is a great devotee, very much surrendered, one-pointed, and has no other thought except service to Rāma. So, he is worshipable.

Service is done to Īśvara and also to His devotees, just as a chaste wife not only serves the husband, but also the other members of the husband's family. When she does service to the other members, that is also pleasing to the husband.

[See also: Deities]

## 78. Past Life

**QUESTION:** Is it possible to find out about past lives, and is it worthwhile to do so?

**ANSWER:** One can know one's past life from what he or she is at present. Whatever one has practiced in the past life creates *saṁskāras*, or a certain nature that is carried into this life. By analyzing one's present nature one can understand what one must have done in his past life. Whatever happens is the result of a previous action and lifestyle. If some people have a certain nature, liking, or interest in a particular field, it is because they have practiced that in the past.

In *yoga śāstra*, there are processes that one can use to get a vision of one's past life, and one can also know it from astrological calculations.

However knowing one's past life does not serve any purpose. One should understand the present, have proper knowledge of *śāstra*, take proper decision, and follow it. The important thing is to make your future, and that depends on the present.

## 79. Personalities, Famous

**QUESTION:** Did the saint Tukārāma meet Śrī Caitanya and was he a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava?

**ANSWER:** They never met. There is a time gap of some 200 years between their life spans. When a person is famous, then people like to attach his name to their own *ācārya* or predecessor. In Mahārāṣṭra hardly anybody knows about Caitanya, but Tukārāma is very famous.

Just as there are some people who do not have a *sampradāya*, but they concoct one by including all the famous names. I know of people from one *sampradāya* who have done just this. They wrote some pages describing the history of their *sampradāya* and put the paper in the kitchen, where wood was burnt. Due to smoke and heat, the pages changed color, and then it looked like an old paper.

**QUESTION:** In Śrīla Prabhupāda's books it is mentioned that Tukārāma took initiation from Mahāprabhu. Is that true?

ANSWER: If that had happened, then it would have been mentioned in Mahāprabhu's biography. There are so many biographers, but no one has mentioned that.<sup>5</sup>

## 80. Philosophies and Other Religions

QUESTION: Are there such things as *bhakti* elements in other (non-Vedic) religions, or is it just to be considered an *upa-dharma*?

ANSWER: In other religions, there is nothing about devotion. The name may be there, but it is all mainly dealing with material things, and not devotion in the real sense.

QUESTION: Where do people go who follow these non-devotional or non-Vedic paths?

ANSWER: They really do not accept God, so they actually are not following God. So if they are not following God, then they will stay here. Unless you perform *ānukūlya* or favorable service to Bhagavān, you cannot get out of the material world.

[Comment by SND]: There is a female disciple of Mahārāja who is a minister and has a church. She said that all the ministers in her particular religion believe that being part of God means that they are God. Although they talk about the teachings of Jesus, they do not want to hear the part that says that they are servants of God. Sometimes, even when she only hinted it to them, they became completely upset. They all think that they are God, and so they just want to enjoy and tell their followers that they should also enjoy as much as they can. They talk sweetly about love and give big feasts. This is *āsurika bhāva* (demoniac nature).

QUESTION: How should we regard Christian saints then?

ANSWER: We should respect them. We do not have to worship them. If you have to deal with them, be respectful. Just like how we regard Rāmānujācārya and Madhvācārya. We are not their followers, as far as our practical life is concerned. We neither hate them nor love them. We respect them as great devotees. If their followers come to us or meet us, we should receive them with respect. As saints or Vaiṣṇavas they are worthy of our respect. We need to understand that *bhakti* comes from *bhakti*. We should not forget this principle.

<sup>5</sup> According to some sources, Tukārāma's predecessors were Rāghava Caitanya and Keśava Caitanya.



**QUESTION:** Is Karma-mīmāṃsā an atheistic philosophy, because they only believe in *karma* and not in God?

**ANSWER:** The Sanskrit word for atheist is *nāstika* and for theist *āstika*. The meaning of *nāstika* is one who does not believe in the authority of the Veda, in the existence of God, and in other related things, like rebirth, etc. Those who believe in the authority of the Veda and the existence of God are called *āstika*, or theists.

Karma-mīmāṃsā is based on the Veda and does not deny the existence of God, so it is not considered as atheistic. Atheistic people are the Buddhists, Jains, or Cārvākas. They emphatically deny the existence of any God and do not accept the Vedas as *pramāṇa*. Anybody who accepts Vedic authority is not considered as *nāstika*.

**QUESTION:** They accept not only the Vedas, but also God, is it not?

**ANSWER:** Yes, otherwise, if there was no God, from where would the Vedas have come? Atheists refute the existence of God and also the literature which propounds God.

**QUESTION:** When Kṛṣṇa told the Vraja-vāsīs to stop the Indra yajña, did He preach Karma-mīmāṃsā there?

**ANSWER:** No, Kṛṣṇa was refuting Karma-mīmāṃsā.

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of this *līlā*?

**ANSWER:** In this pastime, Kṛṣṇa showed us that we should follow what is directly perceivable and not that which is based on blind faith. Generally, in the name of religion, people propagate various things and say, "If you follow this process, then you will get something in your next life." Then people go on doing it. There is no way to verify whether one gets anything or not in the next life. Kṛṣṇa showed that if you do something, then you will see and also reap the results in this life. He said, "Worship Govardhana, who is directly benefiting us because cows graze on Him, and the water and other needs are being supplied by Him." Then Kṛṣṇa also showed that by worship, He directly manifested there. He showed that religion is directly perceivable and not based on blind faith.

God comes to establish religion, but as time passes, people with their own motives come and establish worship of themselves. They put more importance and stress on how people can worship them rather than how they can worship God and follow His words. Like

that, they get followers who will go on following whatever they say without actually seeing whether they are really getting the benefit that they are proclaiming.

For instance, consider Ānanda Mayī Mā. When she was alive, she was very popular. Although an illiterate lady, she was worshiped like God. She did not proclaim herself as God. But her followers even kept the deity of God below her, and she would be put on an elevated platform. All this was done because one scholar from Benares, Gopīnātha Kavirāja, and also some business people glorified her. These business people understood that through her they could make some business. They needed a middleman who could influence the officers and politicians on their behalf. So they portrayed somebody as God or a mystical person and this person became a medium for both sides, and deals were made. Then the crowds come to worship the projected god. This kind of ill tradition is set up in the name of religion. Then God comes and clears it away. That is the significance of *Govardhana-līlā*.

**QUESTION:** In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī mentioned that to become *sāmukhya*, either one starts doing *bhakti* or *jñāna*. What is actually the definition of becoming *sāmukhya*? And what if, say, a Christian, for example, sincerely believes in God? Is that also *sāmukhya*?

**ANSWER:** *Sāmukhya* means surrendering to Īśvara, being a devotee of Īśvara, and following the path of *bhakti*. For this, one has to know the definition of *bhakti*. If a person does not even know what *bhakti* is, then where is the question of *sāmukhya* for him/her? However, if something becomes popular, then everybody uses that terminology.

For example, there was a famous impersonalist, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. He wrote one very famous śloka, which says:

vaṁśī-vibhūṣita-karān nava-nīradābhāt  
pītambarād aruṇa-bimba-phalādharoṣṭhāt  
purnendu-sundaramukharvinda-netrāt  
kṛṣṇāt-param kim api tattvam aham na jāne

“I do not know any truth higher than Kṛṣṇa, who is holding a flute in His hand, has the hue of a new cloud, is adorned in yellow dress, whose lips are reddish like a *bimba* fruit, and whose moon-like face has lotus-like eyes.”

He defines the beauty of Kṛṣṇa in this verse. He wrote an impersonal commentary on the *Gītā*, and in the Twelfth Chapter, he

wrote the above verse. Many people recite this verse, especially here in Vrindavan. Yet, the author of this verse refutes *bhakti*. He wrote a book called *Advaita-siddhi*, establishing Advaitavāda.

In the same way, there were other people, such as Karapātrī Mahārāja, who was a famous impersonalist and lived in Vrindavan about 50 years ago. He used speak on the *Bhāgavatam*, *Veṇu-gītā*, *Gopī-gītā*, etc., although he was a staunch Māyāvādī.

Now the word *bhakti*, devotion, has become popular. So everybody, whether *yogī*, *jñānī*, or *karmī*, talks about *bhakti*. We need to know the definition, the characteristic of *bhakti*, and try to understand if they truly know and follow it. To understand *bhakti*, there has to be a proper process. One must study the literature that explains *bhakti*. Without the *Bhāgavatam* and books like *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Rūpa Gosvāmī, one cannot understand *bhakti*. What is their [Christian's] literature, and is it defining *bhakti* clearly? Do they accept God, His abode, His pastimes, His energies, etc.? We should know if they have any idea about these things. Even in India, those who follow *bhakti* may not have a clear understanding of it. In fact, many who proclaim to be followers of Mahāprabhu do not understand *bhakti*. Without studying *bhakti-sāstra* properly, no one can know *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** It is described that either a *jñānī* or a *bhakta* can become *sā mukhya*. How then can a *jñānī* become *sā mukhya*?

**ANSWER:** A *jñānī* also has to follow the path of *bhakti* to attain *jñāna*—without that, it is not possible. He has to give up any interest in material life and turn his consciousness to the Absolute. In this sense it is *sā mukhya*.

**QUESTION:** How did the *ṣaḍ-darśanas* (six philosophical systems) come into existence and by whom were they spoken?

**ANSWER:** The basic purpose behind all the philosophies is how to become free from misery. People face miseries in this material world, and nobody wants them. Therefore, everyone is making an effort to remain free from misery. First, you try to remove miseries by visible means. If you are sick, then you take medicine, if somebody is troubling you, then you try to counteract that, if you are hungry, you eat food, or if you have some other desire, then you try to fulfill it. But these solutions are not permanent. They only give some temporary relief, and the misery again returns. The question is how to achieve permanent relief from the miseries so that you do not have to become miserable again. The solution is proposed by philosophy.



A common man cannot even define what misery is. If you ask a common person, "What is misery?" or "What is happiness?" he cannot define it. Philosophy defines misery. Misery means that which you do not want or like. You want to achieve something, but an obstacle comes in your way. This is misery. How can I become completely free from this? That is the subject matter of philosophy.

There are three types of misery: *ādhyātmika* (bodily or mental), *ādhibhautika* (caused by others), and *ādhidaivika* (due to disturbances in nature). To become completely free from these is not possible by visible means. Therefore, philosophy tries to take you beyond the body. People are looking for some material gain, some material pleasure (*kāma*), and economic development (*artha*), hoping that these will give them happiness. But these do not give permanent happiness. Philosophy says that the solution lies beyond *kāma* and *artha*. They define it to be *mokṣa*, or liberation. Different philosophers define it in different ways.

1) The first or oldest philosophy is Sāṅkhya. It begins with:

*duḥkha-trayābhghātāj jijnāsā tad apaghātake hetau  
dr̥ṣṭe sāparthā cet naikantātyantato'bhāvāt*

"Inquisitiveness in philosophy comes because of the threefold miseries and the desire to know how to get rid of them."

This is the beginning of Sāṅkhya philosophy. They say if you can understand the difference between material elements (*prakṛti*) and the living entity, the self, or consciousness (*puruṣa*), then by this knowledge you will become free from the miseries. What will happen after that? They do not say. Their philosophy simply says that realization will come by understanding the material elements and knowing that you are not part of them but separate. Then, they propose, you will become free from bondage.

2) The twin sister philosophy of Sāṅkhya is Yoga. It stresses on *sādhana*. The epistemology and ontology of Sāṅkhya and Yoga are the same, but the process and how to achieve it, are different. In Yoga they describe eight steps of *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyaṇa*, and *samādhi*. By following them, you can realize that you are spirit and distinct from matter.

3) + 4) Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are also twin philosophies. They say that you have to categorize things in different items and know that you are separate from all other categories. Nyāya divides everything into sixteen categories and Vaiśeṣika into seven. They have defined



that there are various types of miseries. If you can know that you are the self, then you will become free from those miseries. Their *mokṣa*, or liberation, is becoming like a piece of stone, because they say that the self is not conscious. They say that consciousness comes only in relation with the mind, and if you can separate the mind from the self, then there is no misery. The mind is the root cause of misery. This is their philosophy.

5) Then there is Pūrva-mīmāṃsā. Their preposition is that if you perform religious activities, such as sacrifices, then you will go to heaven, and there you will have pleasure. You endeavor now to enjoy later in heaven. Heaven is not a permanent position. Once your piety is finished, then again you have to come down and again suffer. So this also does not give a permanent solution.

6) Then comes Vedānta and the *Vedānta-sūtras*, which talk about *mokṣa*. There are various schools of *Vedānta* that can be classified into two groups: personalists and impersonalists.

All these philosophies say that you will realize relief from your miseries only after death. As long as you are living, you will have to suffer. When you die, then you will become liberated if you have attained the qualification for it by following a specific *sādhana*.

7) After that comes the ultimate philosophy, which is given by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He explains what happiness is, what misery is, what the root cause of misery is, and how you can get rid of misery and realize happiness right here and now, through *bhakti*.

The basic cause for the appearance of all philosophies is the same: How can we become free from the threefold misery? Different philosophers have developed their own theories and techniques about how we can become free from the miseries of this world.

**QUESTION:** In what sense are the *ṣaḍ-darśanas* imaginary, as it was said yesterday, because some of it seems to be useful?

**ANSWER:** The Sanskrit word *darśana* (literally, “to see” or “to have a vision”) is used for philosophy. *Ṣaḍ-darśanas* means “the six means to experience Reality.” Philosophy is not a proper word for *darśana*. In these *ṣaḍ-darśanas* the process and the object which are to be realized, both are imaginary. Neither the process works, nor the goal is achieved.

There are two divisions of philosophy: One is the *ṣaḍ-darśanas* and the other is *bhakti*. The first one is for those who want to achieve something by their own endeavor. They think, "If I work and make an effort, then I will attain something." Yet, how is it possible? The person is in ignorance and is materially conditioned. Whatever he does is materially motivated and a product of ignorance, which is a product of *māyā*. His knowledge is also a product of *māyā*. By using that knowledge, he cannot escape *māyā*. Yet, this is what all these philosophies are proposing. Those who follow the *ṣaḍ-darśanas*, except for Vaiṣṇavas, all disrespect Bhagavān.

*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas  
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ  
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ  
patanty adho 'nāḍṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ*

"O lotus-eyed Lord, although non-devotees who accept severe austerities and penances to achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. Those who disrespect Your lotus feet fall down even after rising to a high position with great difficulty." (SB 10.2.32)

For that reason, even if they attain a high position or may think they are liberated, they will always fall down, because they disrespect Bhagavān. To fall down means to have material desires. And if their motive is to attain something in the material world, they will again come down to the same old position.

Sāṅkhya, Yoga, etc., are different paths or processes. What is the ultimate goal? It is either *śūnyavāda*, as in the Buddhist philosophies, or Brahman, the impersonal realization. *Śūnya* and Brahman are not defined clearly. The ultimate explanation is given in the *Bhāgavatam*. The Absolute is One and known by three names: Bhagavān, Paramātmā, and Brahman. Realization of the Absolute comes only by knowing Bhagavān. These other philosophies do not talk about Bhagavān, or if they do talk of Him, it is imaginary, as in the philosophy of Advaitavāda. They accept Bhagavān, but He is also material and not the way it is described in *śāstra*.

So basically, these *ṣaḍ-darśanas* are for those people who are not interested in surrendering. One of the purposes of these philosophies is to keep people engaged in mental gymnastics and let them keep thinking that they are attaining something. It is like a dog biting into bone. It hurts its own gums, which bleed on account of chewing the bone. The dog thinks it is getting something. All of these *ṣaḍ-darśanas* are just like that.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu explains the ultimate philosophy. He has clearly explained about the Absolute, His energies, the position of the living entity, and also how to realize this.

The *śaḍ-darśanas* can help us to understand that spirit is separate from matter. If we want to give up something, then we have to understand it properly.

In that sense, it has utility for us, and the utility for those who are not following the devotional path is that instead of doing some nonsense, like materialistic people who are not following any philosophy and are just creating havoc, at least these people follow some discipline, which they have imposed upon themselves, and perform certain *sādhana*s. Although they do not attain anything, at least they do not create havoc for others. That is the utility for them. It is like engaging the genie (ghost-spirit) in climbing a pole so that the genie does not disturb others.

QUESTION: So the *śaḍ-darśanas* can help one to develop some *viveka* (discrimination) or something like that, but the process itself does not bring any tangible conclusion.

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Is it best to first hear the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and then other philosophies like *śaḍ-darśanas*?

ANSWER: In devotional literature, these other philosophies are considered as *pūrva-pakṣa*, or contrary philosophies. So their salient features are covered, but if you want to know them in detail, then you have to study them independently.

If you study these philosophies, you will never understand their essence. Nyāya, for example, is a very big field. And then there is Navya-nyāya, or the Neo-Logic, which is an explanation of just one *sūtra* of Nyāya. It is so voluminous that it has become a completely new field. Out of that, there is just one part dealing with *anumāna* (inference), which has been expanded extensively. This, itself, has become like an ocean.

It is the same if you study modern science. First there was only science, and then it became physics and chemistry. Now there are so many branches and specializations that if you try to study them, you will be confused and not understand why you are studying them in such depth. So there is no end to all these branches.

Ultimately, nobody knows why they are studying to such an extent. How will it be applied practically for the purpose of devotion or any spiritual practice? There is no spiritual practice related to Logic, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, etc.

The *ṣaḍ-darśanas* are all meaningless unless you study the *bhakti* literature. Only when we come to *bhakti* will we understand what the real process is, the purpose of these other philosophies, and exactly where they stand.

So better to first have your base in Vaiṣṇava *darśana* and then study other schools.

QUESTION: If one is on the path of *bhakti*, is it important to know these other philosophies?

ANSWER: It is very necessary to know them, because these are the *pūrva-pakṣas*, or contrary philosophies. To know your own philosophy, you have to know the contrary philosophy. If you want to give up something, you have to know it.

To understand *bhakti*, one has to understand *prasthāna-traya*, the three divisions of *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *Nyāya*, and that means the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, and *Vedānta-sūtra*. To understand *Vedānta-sūtra*, we also have to know the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā*, because *Vedānta* is the *Uttara-mīmāṃsā*.

QUESTION: What is the qualification needed to study these philosophies?

ANSWER: *Jijñāsā*.

QUESTION: Inquisitiveness?

ANSWER: *Duḥkhatrayābhighatad jijñāsā* means that when you have the desire to be free from the three-fold miseries, only then does *jijñāsā* (inquisitiveness) come. If there is no *jijñāsā*, then your motive is to make money and try to enjoy, but you end up suffering.

QUESTION: *Bhakti* seems to be very simple, doing *sevā*. Is it necessary for us to also study all the *Sandarbhas*, *ṣaḍ-darśanas*, *Nyāya*, etc.?

ANSWER: This material world runs on the principle of *karma*. Everybody gets the result of his *karma*, and no one can become free from his *karma*. Whatever they do, they will achieve the



corresponding result. Although the reality is simple, people are not willing to accept it. They just act according to their own mind or intelligence, which is in the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. On the basis of these three *guṇas*, people have their own likes and dislikes.

Bhagavān actually wants to propagate only *nivṛtti-mārga*, not *pravṛtti*, but because people are not interested, He propagates other paths to give support to them. On these other paths, they can do their mental gymnastics and remain engaged, just as a dog that chews on a bone thinks he is getting something from it, but all he gets is his own blood. These other paths are just like that. There is actually nothing real in them, because they are all based on independence of God and are within the folds of the three *guṇas*. People are not interested in surrendering or following the path which God really wants them to follow. Therefore, they do some exercises, feel satisfied, and remain in the material world. Otherwise, the matter is simple. However, when a person is not willing to accept, then what can God do?

Even those people who come to the path of *bhakti* do not accept God, although they say that they are performing *bhakti*, but where do they accept the word of God? They also twist His words according to their own thinking and do not accept what He is really saying. This is the case even with the people who are supposed to be devotees and following the path of devotion. Then what to speak of other people, who are not following *bhakti*?

This is the situation of people in the material world. God gives support to everybody. They can follow something and get the result of their *karma*.

**QUESTION:** For one who accepts the path of *bhakti*, is there a purpose to understanding these philosophical systems?

**ANSWER:** The purpose is to fortify one's own faith, to understand the truth, and to see the futility of these other philosophies. Moreover, if someone else approaches us and argues against *bhakti*, then we should understand their philosophy and not be influenced by them.

It is good to be knowledgeable and have staunch faith in one's own worshipable God. Even if you study *Bhagavad Gītā*, there are many things stated there, and to understand *Bhagavad Gītā* properly, you have to know the other systems of philosophy. Otherwise, people may explain it in a different manner, and it may create a doubt

in your mind. But if you have studied it properly from the correct perspective, then there is no doubt. If somebody has a firm *niṣṭhā* to begin with, however, then it is not really necessary for him to study all these things. But if someone is a guru, then he has to know everything, otherwise how will he remove the doubts of the students? He has to know every philosophy, whether it is directly related to *bhakti* or not.

We are talking about *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. *Śāstrīya-śraddhā* comes on the basis of *śāstra*, so the meaning of *śāstra* has to be understood. All these subjects such as the self, Bhagavān, devotion, or rebirth are not subject to our experience. They must be taught to us. This knowledge is basically known from books, but the books give so many different explanations. How do we ascertain what is what, and what one has to study? Still, it is not necessary that everybody studies them, but whoever has the capacity or ability to study, he/she should study.

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain to us the meaning of this verse:

*ye yathā mām prapadyante  
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham  
mama vartmānuvartante  
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

“I reciprocate with all who seek refuge in Me, in direct correspondence with the nature of their surrender, for all human beings [regardless of their disposition] follow My path in every respect.” (Gītā 4.11)

ANSWER: The meaning is simple. As you approach Kṛṣṇa or think of Him, He also behaves correspondingly. It is just like a business deal. If you give Him five rupees, He will return you five rupees back. He is a good businessman. That is what it means.

QUESTION: I do not understand the second half of the verse that says that everybody is following My path in all respects.

ANSWER: It is all a give-and-take relationship. Just as in the material world, if somebody is a good businessman, then he wants to have all sorts of customers. He understands their desires, and accordingly he will manufacture the products they want. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa propagates the various philosophical systems, because people do not want to take to devotion. According to people's desire, He has propagated all these paths because He wants everyone to be on His path.

For example, it is just proper social behavior for us to help those who help us. Recently, there was an earthquake in Gujarat, and many countries have helped India to recover from it. If there would be an earthquake somewhere else, then India would also be expected to help. This is how to have good social relations. Kṛṣṇa also does this, therefore everybody follows His path.

To perform devotional service, one has to go beyond *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. In *bhakti*, there is no cheating propensity. A devotee is free from envy, he is compassionate. But it is very rare to find such people. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa manufactures different paths according to people's likes. Whether it is the *pravṛtti-mārga* or the *nivṛtti-mārga*, it is He who makes them. This is what it means that everybody is on His path. But that does not mean that everybody is following what He really wants them to follow, i.e., *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is an internal path, and the others are external paths.

**QUESTION:** In Patañjali Yoga, there is *citta-vṛtti nirodha*, the cessation of all thoughts. So the yogis cannot even achieve this?

**ANSWER:** It is not possible. There are examples given in the *Bhāgavatam*, like that of Saubhari Muni or Viśvāmitra Muni. Who can be a better yogi than them? But even they failed.

**QUESTION:** Is the point you are making that the six *darśanas* are actually used as the *pūrva-pakṣa* (antithesis)?

**ANSWER:** Yes, they are the *pūrva-pakṣa*. As far as impersonal philosophy is concerned, it is *sūid* in *śāstra* (*Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* 25.7; *CC Madhya* 6.182):

*māyāvādam-asac-chāstram  
pracchannam bauddham ucyate  
mayaiṣa vāhitaṁ devī  
kalau brāhmaṇa-mūrtinā*

[Śiva informed Goddess Durgā, the superintendent of the material world:] "In the age of Kali, I take the form of a *brāhmaṇa* and explain the Vedas through false scriptures, called *Māyāvāda*, which is nothing but hidden Buddhist philosophy."

*Māyāvāda* philosophy is *asat-śāstra*, and it is only imaginary:

*svāgamaḥ kalpitais tvaṁ ca  
janān mad-vimukhaṁ kuru  
mām ca gopaya yena syāt  
sṛṣṭir eṣottarottarā*



[Addressing Śiva, Viṣṇu said:] “Please make the general populace averse to Me by imagining your own interpretation of the Vedas. Also, cover Me in such a way that people will take more interest in advancing material civilization just to propagate a population bereft of spiritual knowledge. Propagate this Māyāvāda philosophy to turn people away from Me.” (*Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* 62.31; CC *Madhya* 6.181)

It is directly said that Māyāvāda is imaginary, what to speak of other philosophies, which are not even talking about Brahman. They only talk about freedom from material miseries by segregating *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, as in Sāṅkhya, by meditating, as in Yoga, or by understanding the elements, as in Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, etc.

**QUESTION:** One Western scholar presented the idea that religion has two functions: translative and transformative. Translative could be similar to the role of *varṇāśrama*. It is a way of translating or dealing with the world around oneself, which gives meaning and stability in society, like moral principles to be followed, but it does not actually transform one’s consciousness. The transformative aspect of religion is that it does allow one to transcend the ego altogether. Both of these functions are important, because not everyone is able to transform his consciousness. Is this the same as the relation between *varṇāśrama*, *ṣaḍ-darśanas*, and *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** The division between translative and transformative is like the *vyāvahārika* (material) and the *paramārthika* (spiritual) division of Śaṅkarācārya. This division of Śaṅkarācārya influences many modern thinkers. In true religion, there is no such division of translative and transformative. In *uttama-bhakti* there is no division like that. Whatever is translative is also transformative and transformative is also translative. Such distinctions exist only in other paths, such as in *jñāna-mārga*.

*Varṇāśrama* is ultimately inclined towards *bhakti*. Due to its inclination towards *bhakti*, it cannot just be considered to be material. The original purpose of *varṇāśrama* is to propagate *bhakti*. In *bhakti* there are no divisions like that.

The *puruṣārtha* is *ānanda*, which is attainable only through *uttama-bhakti*. This means *ānukūlya* (favorable service) to the guru, and for that you have to act on a practical level. If you can do *ānukūlya*, then that is *paramārthika* (the ultimate thing). It is not that you do something that has nothing to do with the ultimate, or that you do something at the ultimate level that is not also part of your daily living. *Bhakti* is integrated throughout a devotee’s life on all levels.



This distinction between material and spiritual is on the path of *mukti*.

*Bhakti* is for the satisfaction of the other. By performing *ānukūlya* and seeing the satisfaction of the object of love, one feels satisfied. So in *bhakti* the *vyāvahārika* is the same as *paramārthika*.

QUESTION: Rather, he (the Western scholar) was making the point that there are certain processes that are really transcendental and holistic by nature. These pervade every aspect of your being, whereas, there are other processes, which fall into the scope of mundane morality or religiosity. It serves a certain function providing social values.

ANSWER: When you consider *bhakti* as the ultimate *dharma*, then there are no such differences. On other paths they have such divisions as described by him.

QUESTION: Would *varṇāśrama* be considered as being *vyāvahārika* (material)?

ANSWER: Yes, if you see *varṇāśrama* mainly from the *sakāma* (*dharma* performed with material motives) point of view, in which you perform sacrifices for getting some result in your next life, such as going to heaven. The majority of *varṇāśrama* is dealing with such activities. It is all *vyāvahārika*, if you see it from that point of view.

QUESTION: In Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Svāmī's commentary on the first verse of *Bhagavad Gītā*, he says that regarding the doership of the *jīva*, the connection between the soul and the *mahat-tattva* is dissolved in deep sleep. What does that mean?

ANSWER: Basically there are two groups of people:

1) There are those who do not accept the living entity as an ontological distinct reality. They say there is only one reality, which ultimately cannot be described in words, as it has no form, shape, or qualities. When that reality is covered by *māyā*, then it takes the designation of *jīva*. *Jīva* does not have its own quality of doership or enjoyership. This quality of doership and enjoyership comes only when it is in contact with matter in the form of the body. They try to prove that only if a person is awake will there be the feelings, "I exist" or "I am doing." But in sleep, there is no such experience. They do not accept the Vedic statement, "I slept happily; I did not know anything."

2) Those who accept the living entity as factual and eternal, say that *ahamkāra*, which comes from *prakṛti*, is different from the *aham* of the *ātmā*. There is also a real *aham* (ego) of the living entity, the *jīva*. This is superimposed into the material *ahamkāra*. This *aham* is experienced in deep sleep. When a person is in deep sleep, he forgets all of his experiences in the wakeful state. There is no connection between the *jīva* and *prakṛti* or *mahat-tattva*.

**QUESTION:** What does it mean exactly that there is no connection?

**ANSWER:** In deep sleep the *ātmā* is disassociated from the *mahat-tattva*. That is why the *jīva* has no experience of it with the senses or the mind. The experience comes only through the senses, but in deep sleep the *ātmā* is disconnected and cannot experience anything. When it awakes, there is a feeling that "I slept happily." The "I" that slept happily cannot be the material "I," because the material "I" does not exist at this time. The experience that the person remembers cannot be someone else's experience. The principle is that if you remember something, then you must have experienced it. It is not that I experience something and you will recollect it. The one who expresses the feeling, "I slept happily," must have also undergone this experience.

If we do not accept that there is *aham* or ego in the *ātmā*, then this statement is impossible to make. During deep sleep, there is no feeling of *aham* from *prakṛti*. If the living entity does not have its own *aham*, then there cannot be any experience, because experience has to be connected with the ego. There would be no experience if the "I" (ego) did not exist.

The Māyāvādīs try to deny this experience in deep sleep, because if they accept this, then they accept a real ego, and this means there is duality and then their whole Advaitavāda philosophy collapses.

Due to the experience "I slept happily," there has to be an ego that experiences it. That experience is expressed after waking up with the help of the senses and the mind. Then the material ego is connected with the experience.

This is also described in the Eleventh Canto of the *Bhāgavatam* in the talk of the Nava-Yogendras:

aṇḍeṣu peṣiṣu taruṣv aviniściteṣu  
prāṇo hi jīvaṁ upadhāvati tatra tatra  
sanne yad indriya-gaṇe 'hami ca prasupte  
kūṭa-stha āśayam ṛte tad-anusmṛtir naḥ

"The self is born in many different species of life within the material world. Some species are born from eggs, others from embryos, others from the seeds of plants and trees, and others from perspiration. Yet, in all species of life the *prāṇa*, or vital air, remains unchanging and follows the *ātmā* from one body to another. Similarly, the *ātmā* is eternally the same despite its material condition of life. We have practical experience of this. When we are absorbed in deep sleep without dreaming, the material senses become inactive, and even the mind and material ego are merged into a dormant condition. Although the senses, mind, and material ego are inactive, one remembers upon waking that he, the self, was peacefully sleeping." (SB 11.3.39)

The self remains unchanged in the different bodies. It remains unaffected in the state of deep sleep. At this time, the senses are oblivious and the ego is dormant. The ego's continuity, even at that time, is proven by the fact that when we awaken, we remember the enjoyment of a sound sleep. When the living entity is in deep sleep, his material ego is finished, yet the experience of good sleep is remembered. From that experience you have to infer that there is a real ego.

The Vaiṣṇava doctrine is that the word *aham* is related to an object, and that object is the living entity. It is referred to by the word "I," *aham-vācya*. There is a relation of *vācaka*, the sound, and *vācya*, the object it denotes. *Vācya* is the *jīva* and *vācaka* is the word *aham*.

This *aham* is not just the material ego, as the Māyāvādīs propose. They try to prove it from their point of view, arguing that if there is a real *aham*, then it should exist in deep sleep also. However, they argue that the feeling comes only in connection with the vehicle of the body after waking up, therefore the ego is material.

The statement of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Svāmī counters this Māyāvāda proposal. That is what he is trying to portray here. When there is ego, then there is doership and also enjoyership.

The impersonalists accept *avidyā*, and then they create God through *avidyā*. They make two divisions of *māyā*: *vidyā* (knowledge) and *avidyā* (ignorance). *Vidyā* is the *sattva* part of *māyā* and *avidyā* is the *tamo* and *rajo-guṇa* part. Brahman conditioned by *vidyā* is God, and conditioned by *avidyā* is the *jīva*.

The impersonalists say that knowledge comes from *māyā*'s feature of *sattva-guṇa*, called *vidyā*. When you give it up, then you realize that you are Brahman. Ultimately, this is the philosophy of Buddhism,



which is *śūnya-vāda*, because it negates everything. When you negate everything, then there is nothing that really exists, *śūnya*. All is *śūnya*. The Māyāvādīs try to establish this through the Vedic statements, but they give it a different name. They say that this is *avān mānasa gocaraḥ*, it cannot be understood by mind and speech. However, interesting is that to prove this whole concept, they have to accept *māyā*—and *māyā* is *anādi*, or beginningless.

There are six things that the impersonalists accept as beginningless: Brahman, *māyā*, *jīva*, the difference between the three of them, the bondage of the *jīva*, and creation. Without this, they cannot explain their philosophy. Ultimately, they say that it is all *mithyā* (false): *śāstra*, knowledge, guru, and everything is else is *mithyā*. So, according to them, only Brahman exists. *Brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparā* ("The *jīva* is Brahman, which is the only reality").

QUESTION: In the dream state, there is still a connection between the soul and the subtle body, but in the dreamless state there is no identification whatsoever up to the stage of *mahat-tattva*.

ANSWER: Yes, that they also accept.

QUESTION: Some Buddhist literature compares the dreamless state with the *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, except that there is some type of awareness—they say—in *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, which is not there in the dreamless state, and one can learn to project his awareness ultimately to the dreamless state, which is like liberation.

ANSWER: Yes, the Māyāvādīs also say this. Attaining *nirvikalpa*, as defined by them, is not possible, because for *nirvikalpa-samādhi* you have to realize the distinction between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, between matter and the conscious being. Since they do not accept *puruṣa*, who will experience *nirvikalpa-samādhi*? There is no one to experience, and there is nothing to experience. You must accept that there is a conscious entity distinct from matter. That is not accepted by the Buddhists. What is the meaning that you keep your awareness as *puruṣa*, and then you will go into *nirvikalpa*? Who is trying it and how is he trying it? The Māyāvādīs, whose philosophy is superior to that of the Buddhists, do not accept *ahamkāra*, *kartā*, *bhoktā* (ego, doership, and enjoyership) in the living entity. Whatever the living entity is, ultimately, it does not exist, but at least they use the word.

The Buddhists do not even accept this much. It makes no sense that they continue being the experiencer and at the same time reach *nirvikalpa*. Unless the fact is accepted that the living entity has its



own *ahamkāra*, *kartṛtva* (doership), and *bhokṛtva* (enjoyership), there is no question of any realization or awareness.

*Jñāna* (knowledge), *kṛti* (activity), and *icchā* (willing) are three items that belong to the conscious being and not to matter. These cannot be generated by some combination of matter. Matter does not have will power, nor does it take action by itself, nor acquire knowledge. According to Advaitavāda, Brahman also does not have these qualities. So when matter does not have them, and Brahman also does not have, then how does it come into existence, and how do all come into contact with each other? For an effect to occur, there has to be a cause behind it. If the cause does not have will power, then the effect also cannot have it.

Therefore, in Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the living entity is accepted as a conscious part of God.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean that the *icchā śakti* (will power) is also there?

**ANSWER:** Yes. If it were not there in the living entity, then how could it be expressed?

**QUESTION:** You said that for all the other paths, one has to be born in the *varṇāśrama* system, and have the proper *samskāras*. Is this also true for the path of *yoga*?

**ANSWER:** *Yoga* and *jñāna* are preceded by *karma-mārga*. There is no direct entry there. *Yoga-mārga*, the path of *yoga*, and *jñāna-mārga*, the path of knowledge, are basically for liberation, *mokṣa*. A person is qualified for *mokṣa*, when he is free from any desires in this life or the next. If somebody desires anything, then there is no question of *mokṣa*. This stage of being free from material desires comes only when one goes through the process of *karma-mārga*. He first engages in *sakāma-karma* and when he is frustrated with *sakāma-karma*, then he takes to *niṣkāma-karma*. That only leads to renunciation. When he becomes renounced, then only does the process for *yoga* and *jñāna* begin. Therefore, in Kaliyuga, there is no possibility of following the path of *yoga* and *jñāna*. What people are following now, in the name of *yoga* and *jñāna*, is something else. Mostly it is all just a show for collecting followers or money. This, actually, has nothing to do with the path of *yoga* and *jñāna*.

Therefore in Kaliyuga only *bhakti* is possible. The other paths are not possible. Prahlaḍa Mahārāja said in his teachings:

mauna-vrata-śruta- tapo-‘dhyayana-sva-dharma-  
vyākhyā-raho-japa-samādhaya āpavargyāḥ  
prāyaḥ param puruṣa te tv ajitendriyānām  
vārtā bhavanty uta na vātra tu dāmbhikānām

“O Supreme Person, the processes of observing silence, vows, study of the Vedas, penance, self-study, following prescribed duties, giving discourse, living in a solitary place, chanting *mantras*, and trance, are the means of salvation, but for men of uncontrolled senses, these practices become their livelihood. For pretenders, even that is doubtful.” (SB 7.9.46)

People are not sincere, and all these paths of *jñāna*, *yoga*, and chanting just become a business, because hypocrites, those who are attached to the material body, make a business out of religion. That is what you see nowadays. Although it appears in the name of *yoga* or renunciation or *sannyāsa*, it is all business. If the person is not renounced, he will just use it for the sake of the body.

The *Bhāgavatam* says that Kaliyuga is a storehouse of all bad qualities. But there is one good quality—doing *kīrtana*. But now people do *kīrtana* after taking drugs. Doing *kīrtana* also has become a business, as the *kīrtana* parties charge money. Unless the person is sincere, he will make a business out of everything.

**QUESTION:** When children are lonely, they create an imaginary, secret friend. Atheists explain religion like this, that people are lonely and are just creating God in their minds. Is it possible that people who come in contact with *bhakti* create a sentimental satisfaction rather than a spiritual experience?

**ANSWER:** Atheistic people always talk like that. As it is said in *Bhagavad Gītā*:

asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te  
jagad āhur anīśvaram  
aparaspara-sambhūtaṁ  
kim anyat kāma-haitukam

“They say that this world is unreal, without any foundation, and without any God. They say it is brought forth by mutual union and is conceived only out of lust.” (*Gītā* 16.8)

Atheists say that this world is false. It does not have any support or God behind it. It is just a product of sex life. There is no reason

behind it. These are the various statements they make. This is the thinking of atheistic people and its purpose is to deceive others.

Here in Vrindavan, if you go and ask some people where the Govinda temple is, they may give you the wrong direction. When you waste your time and go around and cannot find it, they feel happy. This is their pleasure. This is the mentality of *asuras*. Atheistic, *āsurika* people feel happy when another is bewildered, confused, full of doubts, and in trouble.

But not everybody is a cheater, as there are some saintly people also. If a person who does not have any motive or is self-satisfied says something, then obviously he is not saying it to cheat you.

Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs were highly learned people, even before they met Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They were very intelligent and also materially well-to-do. They were not poor or frustrated with their life. But they gave up everything, came here to Vrindavan, wrote books, and propagated the philosophy. Obviously, such people cannot be cheaters, and they are not confused, bewildered, or imagine and make up a philosophy. They are not crazy nor do they have their own agenda. They had plenty and were very qualified to earn money. Since they took to this path of devotion, propagated it, and wrote books about it, this cannot be because of some sentiment, imagination, or some material motive. They must have experienced something and out of compassion they wanted to give this knowledge to others, because they understood and realized that it was beneficial for others.

Just as a good mother never consciously plans to give trouble to her own son, but instead wants to benefit her son, so does a devotee of Bhagavān also wants other people to love Him and experience a loving relationship. God and saintly people are not cruel. You have to put faith in such saintly people because of their character and their selfless nature. God and His devotees, the saintly people, are neither bewildered nor confused. They have compassion. Therefore, the knowledge they are giving is not just a sentiment or imagination but revealed knowledge. It cannot be compared to the knowledge of a man on the street.

To attain this revealed knowledge, one accepts a guru. For this reason, the qualification of a guru is given. He has to be learned in *śāstra*, has realized *śāstra*, and is practicing it. Otherwise, anybody can become learned but not practice it and make money out of it. Although there are cheaters, it does not mean that everybody is a cheater. For this reason, you should trust the genuine guru and follow him.

Atheists say that this world has no purpose, or life has no purpose—it is useless or purposeless. That is not true, because the person who has created this world is not ignorant. Seeing this creation, you cannot say that an ignorant person has made it. To create something like this, a person has to have knowledge, and such a person is not going to create something that has no meaning. If the world and life had no purpose, then there would be no meaning to any law or any relation. Such a belief would lead to lawlessness and chaos.

Sometimes atheists say that the meaning of this world is just misery. The whole world is just created to give you trouble, and this human form of life is just bestowed to put you in trouble. What is God's pleasure to give you trouble? The purpose is not to give you trouble, just as the mother does not want to give trouble to the baby. God has *karuṇā*, or mercy, like parents; therefore, He is not interested in giving anyone trouble. So the world is neither useless nor is its purpose to give you trouble. Its purpose is that you realize God and be happy.

Knowing this to be the purpose of life, you should follow the process. God is not somebody's poor imagination.

## 81. Piety—Sin

QUESTION: Does material piety give rise to spiritual results?

ANSWER: No. Material piety or pious activities give rise to material results. Only spiritual activities lead to spiritual results. Piety means to follow *śāstra*. One can follow *śāstra* in three ways: *sakāma* (with material desires), *niṣkāma* (without material desires), or in *bhakti*, with the only desire to please Kṛṣṇa. Sin means to be disobedient to *śāstra*.

## 82. Prasāda

QUESTION: We hear in *Bhakti Sandarbha* that one should also offer food that one likes to Kṛṣṇa. How does it fit into the Vrajamood, if one offers Kṛṣṇa food like pizza, spaghetti, etc., and not Vedic preparations?

ANSWER: Whenever you like somebody, you give him also something that you like yourself. Therefore, these preparations also



are given to Kṛṣṇa. The main thing is that it has to be given with devotion. Then only Kṛṣṇa accepts.

QUESTION: And what are the foods that Kṛṣṇa likes?

ANSWER: Of course, Kṛṣṇa likes things that are naturally available in Vraja. Those are specifically dear to Him. But he also accepts something that is offered to Him with love by His devotee, and which the devotee likes.

QUESTION: It says in the *śāstra* that if you take *mahā-prasāda* once, then at least you will take birth as a human being again.

ANSWER: All these things, like *mahā-prasāda* or the holy *dhāma*, have spiritual power in them, but they do not bestow it to an unqualified person, because an unqualified person will misuse it after some time. Although *mahā-prasāda* has this potency, it is not manifest unless the person is qualified. Otherwise, everybody will misuse it, thinking, "I will take *mahā-prasāda* once, and then I can do any nonsense because I will be born as a human being anyway. Then in that human birth again, I will eat it once, and then I can do anything."

Even the *mafia* in Vrindavan put on *tilaka* and neck beads, but *tilaka* and neck beads are not meant for such people. If you put on *tilaka* and wear neck beads, that means you are a devotee of Bhagavān. You are not supposed to be a *mafioso*, capturing other's property. Do you expect that *tulasī* and *tilaka* should manifest their power to them and bless them, in order that they do not get the effects of their wrongdoings? Nobody would want that.

QUESTION: A devotee does not eat anything other than Kṛṣṇa *prasāda*, but sometimes I am very hungry, and then I think that if I eat a package of biscuits, then I can listen to the class more attentively. Some devotees seem really fanatic about this and others are quite lax. Could you say something about this?

ANSWER: The path of *bhakti* is founded on surrendering to Bhagavān. One should give up one's independent mentality completely. There should be no independent feeling, even subtly.

A devotee does not eat anything that is not offered, but this does not mean that every time you have to offer it to the deity. In such circumstances as you are describing, you can make an offering in the mind. However, food should never be taken without

offering, otherwise you are acting independently. So the inner ego or consciousness of "I am not independent, I am surrendered to Bhagavān, and everything belongs to Him" must be maintained.

Just as we explained the verse *api cet su-durācāro* (Gītā 9.30), in the same way the verse *sarva-dharmān parityajya* (Gītā 18.66) is also misunderstood. If you give up all *dharma*, or religion, then how can you function? Giving up means giving prominence to something else. Prominence is given only to Kṛṣṇa. We are His devotees, and we still have to deal in day-to-day life. Whether you drink water, eat food, or consume anything else—it has to be offered, either directly to the deity of Bhagavān or in the mind, so that you do not maintain an independent consciousness. Otherwise, the subtle mentality to remain independent will grow. Having an independent mind will divert you from devotion. So, one must guard against such feelings. Offer everything to Kṛṣṇa.

QUESTION: There are many small things which seem to add up.

ANSWER: The main point is to cultivate the right mentality. First we begin with the gross things, but ultimately you have to guard against the subtle mentality of independence. That is the meaning of *sarva-dharmān parityajya*.

QUESTION: Then we have to be aware of our motives.

ANSWER: Yes, this is complete awareness.

QUESTION: Does it also include things which we are using?

ANSWER: Yes, everything must be offered to Bhagavān.

QUESTION: We have been told that *prasāda* should never be wasted, but what if you are too full and still there is some *prasāda* on your plate? Do you have to eat it anyway and get sick?

ANSWER: You have no other choice but to throw it away, because if you eat it, you will fall sick.

QUESTION: In our Vedic cooking courses we are trying to teach people to cook. Is it alright to show them also how to offer and to cook without tasting the food, etc.?

ANSWER: Offering is for those who are initiated. There is no use of teaching how to offer food to those who are not initiated.

**QUESTION:** That means that these uninitiated people eat only *bhoga* until they are initiated?

**ANSWER:** Obviously. If you are not initiated that means you are independent and your goal of life is to enjoy.

This principle is explained in *Gītā* 3.13:

*yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo  
mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ  
bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā  
ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*

“The virtuous who partake of the remnants of *yajña* are absolved of all reactions to their misdeeds. But those wrongdoers who cook food for their own gratification alone acquire only detrimental karma.”

Those who cook only for themselves are eating sin. This statement is for those who are initiated. They should not eat unoffered food. They should offer before eating. For others, what is offered food to them? They are not offering anything. So what is the sense in just telling them to offer? What will they understand from the offering?

**QUESTION:** Do uninitiated people get some benefit from sharing our *prasāda*?

**ANSWER:** It depends if they have *śraddhā* (faith or trust). If they do not have *śraddhā*, then it has no meaning for them. That is why there is a rule that you do not give *prasāda* to faithless people. They will disrespect it, and it will be an offense on the part of the person who is giving it to them. Knowingly he is making the other person disrespect something that is related to Kṛṣṇa.

There are two types of consciousness or moods: liking and disliking. *Prasāda* or other items that are related to God have potency within them. This is a fact, but it depends on the person's mood and whether or not he has *śraddhā*, and whether he has a liking or a disliking for it. *Prasāda* will substantiate that particular mood only. If the person has *śraddhā*, then he will become more devoted by eating it, and if he does not have it, then his dislike will also increase.

The effect of eating *prasāda* is that one becomes more favorable to devotional service. He should give up his cruelty, envy, and lust and

become a devotee of Bhagavān. That is the real effect. That is the real advantage of eating *prasāda*. That will happen only if a person has *śraddhā* and takes *prasāda* with the proper consciousness. If the consciousness is not proper, then the result will also not be proper.

In Vrindavan, practically everyone is initiated. *Sādhus*, householders, even the local *mafia*, are all initiated and they only eat *prasāda*, but what are they doing? *Mafiosis* are acting like demons. They are *asuras*. Why is the effect not there? If people are offensive, then spiritual things can have no good effect. This does not mean that the object does not have power in it. It will not manifest, because the person using such items does not want it. At least one should desire it. If the person does not desire the effect, then why should God give it?

Only for this reason, there is the instruction in the *śāstra* not to give *prasāda* to those who are averse to devotion. Doing this is the same as throwing *prasāda* in the garbage. If you like somebody and really love that person, then you do not give something related to your lover to anybody and everybody. You keep it for yourself. If you love some boy or girl, and you get something from him or her, then you do not throw it away in the garbage, because then you are showing disrespect. It is displeasing to the person. *Prasāda* is to be respected. It is another thing that we live in the material world and sometimes, because of dealings, we have to give *prasāda* to non-devotees. But do not force *prasāda* on others.

The achievement comes in proportion to one's faith. If the faith is missing, then there is no progress on the spiritual path. Faith is the first step.

Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca  
saṁśayātmā vinaśyati  
nāyaṁ loko 'sti na paro  
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ*

"He who is ignorant, devoid of faith, and has doubts in his mind is ruined. For a man of indecisive mind there is neither this world nor the other, nor even happiness." (*Gītā* 4.40)

A person who is ignorant and faithless is doubtful. He will be lost and destroyed. The reason is that he is ignorant. Therefore he is going to do something wrong. Moreover, he has no faith. So, even if



he comes in contact with anything related to Īśvara, such as *prasāda*, he will not respect it. He will have doubt. So there is no question of any benefit; rather, it will do harm to him.

**QUESTION:** While writing our cooking books, we had so much *prasāda* so we gave it to our neighbors. They liked the food and us, but they did not consciously eat it with the awareness that this is *prasāda*. So there is no spiritual benefit for them?

**ANSWER:** The benefit is according to one's *śraddhā*. When there is no *śraddhā*, then it is just like eating any other food that they like.

**QUESTION:** Previously, we did it with the consciousness, "If people are eating *prasāda*, then they are getting some spiritual benefit."

**ANSWER:** I gave the example that in Vrindavan everybody eats *prasāda*, but where is their consciousness?

**QUESTION:** We are distributing [which means selling] cookies and were first enthusiastically offering everything to *Giridhārī*. What is the practical point now? Should we not offer the cookies, etc.? We still like to offer something to *Giridhārī*, and we distribute thousands of packages, but probably a few hundred people may not like it. What to do?

**ANSWER:** Whatever you eat offer, but what you are selling, there is no need to offer that.

**QUESTION:** Regarding our cooking courses, I can understand that we do not show people how to offer, but can we say that before eating, they should meditate on the food being given by them to God?

**ANSWER:** You can do so. They can be told that it is God who is supplying the food articles, and we should remember and respect Him.

**QUESTION:** In these cooking courses, people expect us to eat with them, but when we do not offer it, how shall we deal with that situation? Should we offer our plate in the mind?

**ANSWER:** You can offer it, because you should not eat anything which is not offered. So you offer and eat it yourself.

QUESTION: In the mind?

ANSWER: Yes.

### 83. Prayer

QUESTION: What does praying really mean? In my old culture, praying is more like begging for something. What is the qualification to pray?

ANSWER: Prayers are of two types:

- 1) In the first, one prays for something specific, such as *bhakti*.
- 2) In the second, one expresses humility. There is nothing specific asked.

Prayer on the path of *bhakti* means to express one's surrender to Bhagavān, because the tendency is always to think of oneself as independent. So, to remind oneself and to express that one is surrendered to Bhagavān, one recites prayer. That is part of the prayer.

QUESTION: Is it the same if I pray to guru or to Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: Yes, but it should be done sincerely, without any hidden motives.

### 84. Preaching, Teaching and Educating

QUESTION: There is this verse in *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*na buddhi-bhedam janayed  
ajñānām karma-saṅginām  
joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi  
vidvān yuktaḥ samācāraṇ*

“A wise person should not unsettle the minds of the unaware who are attached to action. Rather, being absorbed in the consciousness of union, he should engage them in action, while duly performing his own duties.” (Gītā 3.26)

So, when someone who is still attached to fruitive activities, comes to *bhakti*, in which activities should he be engaged?

ANSWER: *Vidvān* means man of knowledge. That is what the teacher or the guru is. The guru is like a doctor. He has to give the medicine in the right way. For example, to somebody who has high fever, the doctor prescribes only light diet and a specific medicine, but somebody who has low fever gets a different medicine. The treatment is individual according to the disease of the person. In the same way, the guru teaches according to the degree of a disciple's material attachments.

Take for example a person who is still very much materially attached. He meets a teacher who teaches him about renunciation and detachment. He may have respect for the words of the teacher, but he cannot give up his old life style. He becomes disturbed in his mind. In that situation, he cannot follow his old lifestyle properly, but he also cannot practice the teachings. The dose is too high for him and only confuses him.

The aim is to give instructions for the welfare of the respective person. This means that first one has to give the person basic knowledge, without any motive to make a business out of it. If the person becomes more interested, then after some time you give more knowledge.

Unfortunately, unqualified people have spoiled the path of devotion. Therefore, people do not have faith or they lose their faith in this path and in God. The next thing this verse says the teacher must follow the path himself/herself tenaciously.

QUESTION: What is the minimum qualification for somebody to follow *bhakti-mārga* or receive instructions on it?

ANSWER: It is important to give knowledge about *bhakti*, but it has to be given gradually, according to the capacity of the person. The aim is that everyone should take it for his or her welfare. In addition, you also have to practice it yourself. That has much more power than only talking.

Just as when Nārada Muni met the hunter Mrgāri, he preached to him several times for several days in small doses. First Nārada created some doubts in the mind of the hunter for the purpose of making him ask questions. You also have to do this, and talk in small doses if the person is interested, but one should talk about *bhakti* only if someone is really interested. Otherwise, it is better to let go of it.

**QUESTION:** Is it not just a waste of time to invest so much energy and time so that people might become interested?

**ANSWER:** No, because it takes some time to see if the person is interested in *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** We are beginning to prepare a curriculum for the Jīva School of Philosophy and to print books to accompany what is taught. Our primary intention is to present the conclusion of the Gosvāmīs and to publish the works of the Gosvāmīs in English.

In doing so, we feel that it is necessary to address the ideas that are currently prevalent in society and to publish some introductory books, as well as books that explain the gist of our philosophy. We see in the last 30 years that there is a tremendous interest generated in Eastern philosophy, particularly in Buddhism and Advaita-vedānta. The market is flooded with books that present the essence of their ideas, taking into consideration the mentality of modern thinkers. It seems that if we want to make an impression on the educated class of people, we have to present our conclusions in relation to modern ideas. As Jīva Gosvāmī previously had to establish the supremacy of *bhakti* in relation to the six *darśanas* and Advaita-vedānta, it seems that we have to establish the validity of *bhakti* in relation to modern psychology, science, world religion, and spirituality. Is this a valid consideration or not?

**ANSWER:** It is proper to do that. This philosophy is not even known in India, what to speak of the West.

In India, the common man does not know it. What to speak of the common men, even the scholars do not know it. For example, the Gītā Press, which is very popular, brings out a magazine called *Kalyāṇa*, and every year they publish a special issue, about 400 pages thick. They choose a topic and then different scholars write on it. Once, the topic was about the saints of India. There was no mention of our *sampradāya* in that. It was a special issue about human religion, but nothing was mentioned about our philosophy in that. All sorts of philosophies were mentioned, but nothing about Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

It is necessary to write books for the common man, because the common man does not have the time to read thick books and go deeper into details, but we should also present books for specialized people. Both should be done.



**QUESTION:** The modern approach is to appreciate that which is valid in any great system of knowledge, whether it is psychology or religion. The trend now is toward integral spirituality, that which embraces the best from all the great traditions of the world.

1) The first step in this integral spirituality is to sample all the orienting generalizations or basic truths that each field believes it has to offer humanity.

2) These generalizations have been arranged into chains of networks of interlocking conclusions. Instead of asking which approach is right and which is wrong, it is assumed that each approach is true but partial, and then to fit these partial truths together and to integrate them. It is not to pick one and get rid of the others.

3) The third step in this overall approach is the development of a new type of a critical theory. Once one has the overall scheme that incorporates the greatest number of orienting generalizations, that scheme is used to criticize the partiality of narrow religious or knowledge systems. The criticism is not of their truth, but of their partial nature.

We would like to show the superiority and completeness of *bhakti*, using such an integral approach, by validating other religious ideas and knowledge systems and showing how they are partial in nature. By such an approach, we aim to show that *bhakti* is the highest development of consciousness. Is this approach acceptable?

**ANSWER:** This is actually the trend in Sanskrit literature. When they want to establish any philosophy, then they show the incompleteness in other systems. For example, in *Bhagavad Gītā*, *bhakti* has been established, where all the other systems have also been touched upon, whether it is Yoga, Sāṅkhya, *jñāna*, or *karma*, and then it is shown as well how they are not complete in themselves. About *jñāna* it is said:

“The misery of those whose minds are attached to the unmanifest (*avyakta*) is greater because the goal of the unmanifest is attained with difficulty by embodied beings.” (*Gītā* 12.5)

In *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, “Even the *jñānīs* come to Me,” but He makes clear that it is a very difficult process. Many times Arjuna asks the question what is superior. He says, “You are glorifying this, you are glorifying that, but what exactly is superior?” This shows that Kṛṣṇa is not speaking of just one path. He speaks of a particular path, then described something better, and ultimately establishes *bhakti* as the supreme process. He says, “This is the most confidential.”

This is a process to teach properly. You explain each popular philosophy of a particular time. Then present that philosophy as the *pūrva-pakṣa* (antithesis) by showing what is lacking in it. Then finally establish *bhakti* as the supreme philosophy. This is what has to be done.

**QUESTION:** In other words, you can give validity to a particular system, just like in the *Gītā*. It is not that Kṛṣṇa says that *karma-yoga* or *jñāna-yoga* have no relevance, but they are relevant to a certain level of development. If one wants to have a clear understanding, then he has to see where each one fits within the complete system.

**ANSWER:** Yes. That is what Kṛṣṇa has shown. In addition, He says that without *bhakti*, the others are not functional. There is *karma-mārga*, but Kṛṣṇa has explained *karma* mixed with *bhakti*. Even Yoga or *jñāna* have been shown to be mixed with *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** Is it not that some of the topmost Western philosophy scholars were actually great devotees, and their basic philosophy was that the goal of life is pure love of God and one should serve the Lord? Is it possible that these people have become directly inspired by God to come to these conclusions without proper *paramparā*?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti*, or love of God, is not known to anybody except Śrī Caitanya and His followers. As far as other people's talk about love of God or service to God is concerned, it is just talk. Other people cannot even define who God is and what love is. Due to the same use of the word, i.e., love, one should not think that there is no difference between Śrī Caitanya's philosophy and others who talk of love. This type of talk you can find everywhere.

For example, there was Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a great Advaitī, radical non-dualist scholar, who lived after Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He composed one very famous verse in which he describes Kṛṣṇa's beauty. He says: "I do not know anything superior to Kṛṣṇa." But He is the same person who has completely refuted *bheda*, or the path of devotion, and established impersonalism. The book itself is called *Advaita-siddhi*, or "Establishing Advaita." What does he mean by Kṛṣṇa or that Kṛṣṇa is the highest or most beautiful? This is meaningless, but the words carry people away. He has even written a book called *Bhakti-rasāyana*, or "Elixir of devotion," and yet he is a staunch impersonalist.

There are also people who have the ability and intelligence to speak and write nicely, although they themselves do not know what they are saying. Just as poets write very beautiful poetry, they can

imagine very nice things, but this does not mean that they actually know or realize what they are writing. They just have the inspiration. Many times this is what people do. Otherwise, if there is love of God, then you have to explain it. For instance, if you study *Prīti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī explains *prīti* (love), *āśraya* (the person who loves), and *viśaya* (the object of love). Who is God, actually? What does it mean to love Him? How can this love be attained? Nobody defines these things unambiguously.

Another example is that of Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa, whom some consider to be Rāma and Kṛṣṇa together. He has spoken all sorts of things, but ultimately, he is an impersonalist. Still, he is considered to be a great *bhakta*. He used to do *kīrtana* and manifest all sorts of *bhāvas* in his body, like Śrī Caitanya. But what does it mean, especially when that same person glorifies impersonalism?

There is also the example of Śaṅkarācārya. Everybody knows that Śaṅkarācārya is the founder of Advaita-vāda, at least in Kaliyuga. He has written a famous song:

*bhaja govindam bhaja govindam / bhaja govindam mūḍha-mate  
samprāpte sannihite kāle / na hi na hi rakṣati ḍukṛñ-karane*

“O fool, just serve Govinda, serve Govinda, serve Govinda. At the time of death all your scholarship will not help you.”

What is the use in writing this song? Śaṅkarācārya himself was always engaged in scholarship, debates, and refutations. He was never doing *bhajan* for Govinda. All the Advaitavādīs study scriptures, although this verse criticizes studying, and they do not do any *bhajan* for God, but they also sing this song, give lectures, and get followers.

In Vrindavan, there are many *sampradāyas* that talk extensively about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their love, but what is their philosophy? The whole thing is about sex, because their biggest thing is to get Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa married. It is a very big festival that they perform. Then they will talk about *nikuñja līlā*, or the meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in a bower of creepers, but this has nothing to do with *prīti*.

Like that, everybody has just copied something that sounds nice. These people do not even talk about *bhakti*, they only talk about *prema* and *rasa*. It is most interesting that everybody can talk about *prema*, although they may not really know what the term means.

No one really knows. It is only Caitanya Mahāprabhu who established Kṛṣṇa. The Gosvāmīs had to work very hard to establish Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.



This talk anybody can do. In fact, in the material world, even young boys and girls talk about love, but all their talk is simply repeating what they have heard. When you read a newspaper, you can also speak about so many things, as if you really know about them. The people who write for these newspapers can write on any topic, because that is what they do all the time. It is just like that. This has nothing to do with *bhakti*, *prīti*, or anything. They do not even have a conception of what it is.

It is necessary that preaching be done, because Caitanya Mahāprabhu came, and then the Gosvāmīs worked so hard to write all this literature. But now people do not even know what this literature is all about. The philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu should be known. Then, at least, people will know what Reality is, even if they do not follow it. Therefore, it is necessary to write small, short books for easy comprehension.

However, there is no need to attack people as some others do. It is not good to call names or abuse others. You have to take the *pūrva-pakṣa* (antithesis), but you don't have to criticize in strong language. There should be no feeling of enmity or hatred. It is not proper to do that.

We have enough material from the Gosvāmīs' literature. All philosophical points are covered. So that should be presented nicely, and it should be of two types. One type of literature should be of the preaching type, another for in-depth study.

There should be at least one place where people are following the philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This religion is not just for preaching but mainly for following it. Common people need explanation and also example. Therefore, there should be at least one place where the *sādhus* are practicing it, doing proper *ācaraṇa* (practice).

Even if one person, who takes to it sincerely, can be brought to this path, then that is success, as it is pleasing to Bhagavān and the *ācāryas*. So a sincere effort should be made.

Now, because of technological advancement, there are many facilities available for preaching. It can all be used. Previously it was so hard. There were not even printing presses. Now it is easy to spread the message. So it should be done, but in a good manner. It should not be made into a business. For sex and money there is no need of any philosophy. This philosophy should not be aimed at making money or to propagate sex. It should not be misused for that.



**QUESTION:** Could you say something about the Jīva Institute, specifically as a vehicle for spreading these teachings of Mahāprabhu?

**ANSWER:** You have to get people who can understand *uttama-bhakti* and have *niṣṭhā* in it. It is possible only through education. Jīva Institute is formed for this purpose. How you will do it, however, is up to you. But the only way it can happen is through education. This is the basis. You should focus on that. The Gosvāmīs wrote an immense amount of literature. So there should be a place where one can come and study this literature. At present, there is no such institution anywhere. The Jīva Institute is formed to fulfill this need. In this way, the literature of the Gosvāmīs will be protected and their teachings will be propagated. You should make the Gosvāmī literature available, teach it, and follow yourself. Let others see your good example.

*Uttama-bhakti* will not be popular among the masses, like other paths. If you want to make anything popular, then you have to give permission for people to have two things: food, like meat and wine, and sex. That is what people want—food and sense enjoyment. Tell them that they can have it in the name of religion, and you can get the masses. Otherwise, people have no interest in God.

*Uttama-bhakti* cannot become popular, but if you want something to happen, then it can happen only if you have people who are staunch in their trust and understand the philosophy properly. This is possible only through education.

*Dharma* means discipline given by God. It means following His instructions, but, as I said earlier, people do not have an interest in that.

**QUESTION:** What is the qualification of a person to preach Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?

**ANSWER:** The qualification is, first of all, that you should be fixed, be truthful and sincere, know the subject properly, and you must know how to deal with people. One must be able to judge the qualification and capacity of people to understand this philosophy. Then accordingly one should explain the philosophy. These are the qualifications.

**QUESTION:** How do you see the spreading of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya?

ANSWER: There is a very special need for the teachings of Caitanya Mahāprabhu to be known in the world, because only this teaching can bring peace, wealth, opulence, unity, fearlessness, and protection in society.

The main thing is that preaching has to be done with a sincere intention, and not with some business mentality or some other motive. For that, the person must first understand it properly, have *niṣṭhā*, firm faith in it, and must practice it. Then one can tell it to others.

It is most difficult to make anybody understand this teaching, because people in general have a materialistic mind, which is ultimately a destructive mentality, called *āsurika bhāva*. Therefore, to make others understand this is not possible unless the person himself is very sincere and faithful about it, and is practicing it. Only then should one devise means as to how they can spread it to others.

Otherwise, there is no lack of preaching. It has been preached all over the world, but it has not served the real purpose of Caitanya Mahāprabhu for which He came. This has not happened. That type of preaching, which is motivated by acquiring name, fame, wealth, or followers, is not beneficial for society. These teachings of Śrī Caitanya are meant to give peace, happiness, progress, and fearlessness to people. I expect the Jīva Institute to do a sincere job of spreading the teachings of Śrī Caitanya for the welfare of society. You should use your intelligence and expertise to do this. That will be a great service, and it will please Bhagavān.

QUESTION: When you say, “education so that people are getting *niṣṭhā*,” do you specifically mean reading books?

ANSWER: Yes. That is why the Gosvāmīs composed so much literature, including grammar, *sāhitya*, *alankāra*, and so on. Otherwise, people have their natural instinct and their natural *saṁskāras*, and they just follow that. Even if you tell them about Kṛṣṇa, their *saṁskāras* will continue. Only through education it is possible to wipe out the old *saṁskāras*. Then they will accept it, and then they will have real *śraddhā* in it.

QUESTION: Even if one can read and understand Sanskrit, it is still not possible to understand these books just by reading them by oneself.

ANSWER: I am not talking about reading. I am talking about studying. Education is not reading.

QUESTION: You have to study from a teacher?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Even if we are not on the level of a pure devotee, when the opportunity to preach comes, shall we take it and preach about what we do know and have?

ANSWER: Anybody can speak whatever he knows, but it is of no value if the person himself does not have resolution on this path. Then it is just like playing a recorded message. If you have a mouth, you can speak, and nobody is going to restrict you from doing that; but first you yourself should have firm faith. You should be firmly fixed and practice it, and only then can you have an influence on others. This *dharma* is based on *ācarāṇa*, or one's own practice. *Ācarāṇa* is the first thing. Everybody needs support from others, and you get support by speaking. So what, if you speak nicely and get a few followers? But that is not *dharma*. *Dharma* means you practice. Its root is in practice. That is the first thing, and if it is not practiced, then it is only business.

QUESTION: What does practice mean? By practicing celibacy, does that mean that I am free from lust? I could be trying to be renounced, but does that mean that I am free from greed?

ANSWER: This is hypocrisy, and that is what I am saying. I am not saying that you practice it in a hypocritical manner. Practice means to sincerely follow the real thing. That is why I said that you should be fixed. You should have faith in it and practice it. Why do you have to be a hypocrite?

QUESTION: How can I say, "Be free from lust!" when I myself am not free from it? Does it mean that I should not tell it to somebody until I am free myself, which will probably take me a lifetime?

ANSWER: That is what I am saying: You can say it, but it has no value.

QUESTION: Until we are perfect, does it mean that we should not talk about these kind of subject matters to anyone, because it is useless?

ANSWER: First you have to have *śraddhā* in devotion. If you have *śraddhā*, then it will not take you a lifetime to become free from it [lust, etc.].

**QUESTION:** If *sādhana* begins with *dikṣā*, then what is the definition of all these activities that lead to the point of *dikṣā*? For example, someone may read in a book that chanting is good, and then he starts chanting on his own, and so on. Should someone who has not received *dikṣā* be encouraged to practice chanting, offer food, and so on?

**ANSWER:** These activities that are done before accepting a guru are not part of *sādhana-bhakti*. They can be taken as pious deeds. Generally, when people perform these activities, such as going on *parikramā*, chanting, or going to the temples, they are doing it with some purpose in mind. They want to get something. They have some motive behind it that they want to achieve, and which is generally material.

*Bhakti*, however, is favorable service to Bhagavān, *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. It is done not just because somebody is trying to achieve some goal, but for the satisfaction of Bhagavān. *Bhakti* is either *vaidhī* or *rāgānugā*, meaning that either one is following the *śāstric* injunction or one likes it. The ultimate purpose is that one fixes one's mind on Bhagavān and does not desire anything personally. That is called *bhakti*. *Bhakti* happens by the will of *Īśvara*. When *Īśvara* inspires somebody, then this person truly takes to the path and properly follows it. Unless one follows the proper process, it is not accepted as part of *bhakti*, because the person is still acting based on his independent desires.

You should encourage people to take to activities, such as offering food or chanting, but they should know the purpose behind what they are doing. Someone can do these activities and be thinking, "Now I do not need *dikṣā*. I do not have to accept a guru. Just by chanting or following these devotional activities, I will become perfect." This mentality will make them independent and transgress the *śāstric* injunctions. Then they will develop pride that they are also devotees. They will attack those who are following the proper path. This is not good. These activities have to be done in a favorable manner. Otherwise, people like *Śiśupāla* and *Paundraka* were also chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa, but acting in an unfavorable manner. They wanted to kill Kṛṣṇa. This kind of chanting does not help a person.

There is a magazine called *Kalyana*, from *Gītā Press*, Gorakhpur. They are always encouraging people to chant, but they do not inform people that they should follow the process of devotion, accept a guru, take *dikṣā*, and follow the process. This kind of encouragement is not correct if you do not explain the real goal



behind chanting. Then people will just have their own materialistic ideas and will use these activities to attain something material. This is not the purpose of *bhakti*. The purpose of *bhakti* is to perform *ānukūlya* to Bhagavān. If that is the aim, then it is good.

There are two paths, *sat* and *asat*—the path of devotion and the materialistic path of enjoyment. Just as people who are following the materialistic path form their own groups and encourage people on that path, so you also have to do it in this way and encourage people to come to the right path. Otherwise, this knowledge will be lost.

QUESTION: There are verses in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*:

*pythivīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma  
sarvatra pracāra hoibe mora nāma*

“In as many towns and villages as there are on the surface of the world, My name will be chanted.” (Antya 4.126)

Devotees interpret this verse that the day will come when Śrī Caitanya’s movement will be spread all over the world. But given the endeavor that has been made, there are so very few people that have *niṣṭhā* as you have explained. Then how is it to be understood that this is a movement for the masses?

ANSWER: Generally, when something is preached at a mass level, it is done with a certain technique. One technique is to criticize everybody, and in the name of religion give what people want. If you study the history of people who have preached, you will see that this is their main technique. In this way, you can get a lot of followers, but this does not have any spiritual meaning to it.

Although Śrī Caitanya’s teachings are meant for society and are beneficial for the masses, they have to be propagated properly. As already said, first the person must have *niṣṭhā* and understand it himself, and then only, can he/she preach and help others.

For example, in the beginning, when Buddha started teaching, his followers mostly came from the lower classes. The *brāhmaṇas* didn’t follow him, because he criticized the Vedas. And then, when he had a large following, even the *brāhmaṇas* came. When the *brāhmaṇas* came, then even the kings followed him. When the kings became Buddhists, then the whole society followed. Once upon a time, all of India was Buddhist, but then it degenerated.

Somehow you attract a crowd around you, even if they may not be very intelligent. Once you have a crowd, then the intelligentsia will come. But these techniques do not help ultimately if one's motive is not right.

Preaching should be done in a proper manner, and then it has benefit, whether the masses accept it or only a few people.

**QUESTION:** Is the idea that the name of Kṛṣṇa will be chanted in every town and village a dream or an unrealistic goal?

**ANSWER:** There are basically two aspects:

1) One is *sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*, "My Name will be preached everywhere." This is already happening, because there is so much facility to preach on radio, television, internet, etc.

2) Yet, to actually know the teachings and have *niṣṭhā* (be fixed) in that and follow it—that is not possible on a mass level. That is possible only through education, and even if only a few people have *śraddhā* (faith) in it, then they can spread it. The masses can accept these teachings only at an external level. The masses will not understand the essence at all.

That is basically what the verse is saying, that it will be known but not that everybody is going to have faith in it and take the message to their heart.

Now, because of preaching, although Caitanya Mahāprabhu is known all over the world, people have absolutely no trust in His teachings. Even the common man has lost faith in a person who has *tilaka* and *kañṭhī-mālā*.

Previously, people used to give great respect if they saw somebody wearing *kañṭhī-mālā* on his neck and *tilaka* on the forehead. It meant that this person was very devoted, truthful, pious, and compassionate. But now nobody cares. It has become so cheap. This is the result of improper preaching.

Preaching is necessary; otherwise *uttama-bhakti* will become completely lost. But it should be based on proper teaching, so that at least a few people will have a proper understanding and *śraddhā* in the teachings of Bhagavān. It should be based on *śraddhā*.

Even in the army, people do whatever they are told, but in field of religion, nobody has any *śraddhā* in the words of God, although

here the surrender should be much more than in the army. In the army, of course, they follow because of fear or because they get a salary, but in *bhakti* it should be natural, because one likes to serve. This is the type of *śraddhā* people should have. This is the purpose of preaching.

Otherwise, there is so much preaching, but you can hardly find one person who is truthful to the teachings of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

QUESTION: It will be the duty of the devotees to make it available to everyone, but then it is up to the people in general as whether they can accept it.

ANSWER: That is what I am saying. The teachings should be given, and whether people accept them or not, that is up to them. But it should be presented in a proper manner.

QUESTION: Mahārāja has built this big library room. What are his plans, desires, and visions for this library?

ANSWER: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came and gave certain knowledge or education, and the Gosvāmīs wrote literature on His instructions. The main purpose of this library is to preserve these teachings and also to let others know about them.

The library is to protect the literature, so that people can study. It is not just keeping the books, but also sharing their knowledge. The Gosvāmīs' books should be preserved and propagated; otherwise, they will be lost.

## 85. Prema

QUESTION: In *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* there is a description how Mahāprabhu and the Pañcatattva opened the storehouse of love. On the other hand, it is very rare to attain that love of God. How to understand these seemingly opposite concepts?

ANSWER: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not give *bhakti* and *prema* to anybody. He comes with His own associates and gives them *prema*, which they already have, but by seeing these *līlās* between Bhagavān and His eternal associates, some people became attracted, got *śraddhā*, and in this way the path of *bhakti* began.

*Prema* is the *svarūpa-śakti* of Bhagavān and it encompasses the *hlādinī-śakti* (the bliss potency), and the *sāṁvit-śakti* (the knowledge potency).

Kṛṣṇa Himself behaves like a devotee to experience *prema* in the exchanges between Himself and His associates. Both Kṛṣṇa and His associates experience *prema*. *Prema* is His own *svarūpa-śakti*.

## 86. Progress in Spiritual Life

**QUESTION:** I have been connected with this path for around 20 years, but after hearing again and again about surrender, I realize that I may not have made any progress in *bhakti*, and this makes me fearful. What shall I do in this situation?

**ANSWER:** What you have understood, you should follow that, cultivate that, act on that, and not look back to the past. It is just like coming out of darkness and into light. When you come from darkness into light, then you should remain in the light and not go back again into darkness. It also happens that when a person has been in darkness for a long time and comes into the light, then his eyes shut. One's reaction may be that it would be better to go back again into the darkness, but actually it is better to stay in the light and proceed from there.

**QUESTION:** Part of my fear is that now I have a proper guru, but I realize that I am not a proper disciple as I have so many desires, *anarthas*, wrong concepts, etc.

**ANSWER:** Regarding qualification, nobody is qualified. Qualification comes by the grace of Bhagavān. Otherwise, what is our qualification? If we understand and our doubts are cleared, then we have received the mercy. When a decision is made with a clear, proper understanding, then Bhagavān gives the qualification, because ultimately it is He who inspires us.

Therefore, there is no cause for fear on this path, because if you are on the true path, there is nothing to fear. Fear is there when you are on the wrong path. Fear is in darkness, not in light.

Generally, what happens is that when people meet an unqualified guru, they immediately accept him. To accept a wrong thing does not take time. It happens quickly and without any doubts. Some are immediately convinced. The reason for this is the defects in that person. It is not because of his good qualities.



But when somebody accepts a proper guru, it is not because of the person's defects but because of his good qualities. Such acceptance is done in knowledge. The other one is done in ignorance and by the influence of others, or by listening to some flowery speech. If one accepts a guru like that, when he hears a different flowery speech, he may change the guru.

The guru should not be accepted because of some powers he possesses, such as knowledge of past, present, and future. He is accepted because he understands *śāstra*. You hear him and are convinced after your doubts are removed. This is done with proper deliberation, not because of some sentiment or because he is a great preacher.

To make a decision like this and then be determined to follow is the qualification of the disciple. After that, the other things are supplied. Therefore, there is no cause of fear. Fear comes because one thinks, "I left one guru already, what if I leave this one also?" This should not happen when you accept a genuine guru with proper understanding. Once you get the real taste, you will not leave, because you cannot get this taste anywhere else.

You can leave other paths, because they are all material and thus transmutable, but once you have come to the real path of *bhakti*, there is no question of leaving it. Therefore, the decision should be made with proper understanding. There is no fear, because it is absolutely impossible to leave this path. After leaving *bhakti*, where would you go? There is nothing superior to *bhakti*.

You have to study the mentality of a person who takes to this path. The qualification on this path is that a person develops a very strong or intense desire to follow this path. Once he has an intense desire, his mind cannot be disturbed. It is completely fixed on this path and cannot be deviated.

You should first study what greed is. If you have greed for some object, then you can see how your mind naturally runs along that trail and cannot be deviated. When you study the mind of a child, you will find that he likes to eat, say some sweets, *rasagulas*, etc., and his mind becomes very fixed on that. He does not think of anything else until he gets it. This is the qualification on this path. This path is based on experience, knowledge, and intense desire. When these things are there, then you will not slip away.

You realize that this is the most important thing. This feeling comes to you, and it does not come because of some emotion, but because you actually realize it. You also have knowledge based on

śāstra. *Bhakti* is based on knowledge, and this is the most wonderful type of knowledge. On top of that, one has an intense desire for the process.

At least, you should try to understand. Even if you do not follow, still try to know what it is. Just knowing is wonderful, what to speak if one develops a desire for it. Once this happens, there is no question of leaving this path.

Otherwise, this path is so great that even Brahmā, Śiva, and the Nava-Yogendras could not approach God with such a mood. Kṛṣṇa is willing to give *bhakti* if you have made the decision with proper understanding. So there is no fear in this process. Fear comes when you are in ignorance.

Materialistic people do business. They earn a lot of money, some name and fame, and enjoy. When some person sees this, he thinks, "I also want to become like that." Then his mind becomes fixed. He makes so many plans to earn money. Day and night he undergoes so much trouble, but he never gives up the idea. Even if he fails, still he will continue. But this type of determination is based on ignorance, and it only leads to misery. So how much more fixed is a devotee, who is in knowledge? Surely he/she will be successful. So, there is no question of deviation or fear in this process.

**QUESTION:** How can one make progress in *bhakti* and reach *ruci*?

**ANSWER:** First you have to understand *bhakti*. It is difficult for people to understand *bhakti-yoga*. Mahāprabhu gave Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs just hints, and they understood everything. They just heard some sutras, short conclusions, and wrote so many books, built temples, and did so many wonderful things. They are His eternal associates. Therefore it was possible for them. For us it is important first to understand *bhakti*. In the Upaniṣads it is said:

*bhaktirasya bhajanam ihāmutra upādhinairāsyena  
amuṣmin manaḥ kalpanam*

"*Bhakti* is service and fixing the mind in Him (Bhagavān) without any desire (*upādhi*) in this world or the next."

People in the material world have desire only for two things: *artha* and *kāma* (wealth and sense enjoyment). There is nothing else people want. Basically, they want sense enjoyment, and for this they need wealth. For such people, it is impossible to understand *bhakti*.

By the grace of Bhagavān, one is inspired to understand *bhakti*. If we understand it by the grace of Bhagavān and are without any motives, then our mind is fixed on Kṛṣṇa. Then one makes the decision to follow this path and accepts a guru. Once the guru is accepted, then the seed is given. After that, if you perform service sincerely, without any deceptive mentality, then Kṛṣṇa further helps. Although it is given at the time of *dīkṣā*, because of our disturbed mind, we cannot realize it.

*Bhakti* is the *saṁvit* and *hlādinī* potency of Bhagavān. It is Kṛṣṇa's internal potency, and it is knowledge and bliss. Therefore, by execution of *bhakti*, knowledge comes. This is also the purpose of *dīkṣā*, which gives knowledge. When one serves without personal motives, one gets a taste. This is the experience of one who progresses in this process.

First, one begins with *śraddhā* and performs service. This gives him a taste and finally one attains *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* is Kṛṣṇa's own potency, and there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and *bhakti*. He personally gives it.

**QUESTION:** When one follows the *rāgānugā-mārga*, is there some *nirupādhi* (selfless service) in the beginning?

**ANSWER:** When one is initiated, then one accepts it. *Nirupādhi* means without having any other motives. If it is not *nirupādhi*, then you only serve your own material desires. *Rāgānugā* is *nirupādhi* from the very beginning.

**QUESTION:** How can we understand these different levels of spiritual development? Sometimes there is a different pace of growth, or even regression in spiritual life. Does this depend on the discipline of the person, on his personality, or is this just Kṛṣṇa's mercy?

**ANSWER:** On the path of *bhakti*, the progress depends upon the grace of Bhagavān. *Bhakti* is different from other paths like *jñāna*, *yoga*, or *karma*. On other paths, the person performs some *sādhana* as they do in *karma*, to attain some result. The result depends on one's own action. Common people have no ability to understand *bhakti*. Therefore, such questions arise, because we have heard about other paths, or have heard about *bhakti* mixed with other paths. *Bhakti* has been presented in an improper manner.



*Bhakti* is the internal energy of Bhagavān. *Bhakti* is Bhagavān Himself, because His energy is not independent of Him. So when a person takes initiation, then God Himself accepts him and gives him *bhakti*. This *bhakti* is not separate from God. God gives *bhakti* by His will and grace, and then one makes progress by engaging in *bhakti*.

On other paths, the person performs some *sādhana* because he has material desires that he wants to fulfill. He depends on his own efforts. In *bhakti* also, people have a similar type of idea. People think, "I will perform this action and then I will progress." Progressing means that I will become something.

All these concepts have to be given up. This is the meaning of becoming free from all deceptive mentality, *dharmah projjhita-kaitavaḥ*. This whole idea that I want to become something, even on the path of *bhakti*, carries the same type of contamination as on other paths. This signifies a desire to be independent of God. Otherwise, on this path, there is no other thought except that of doing favorable service (*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*). One's happiness is only in service. So when that is the motive and the goal, then one does not think of making any other progress. This very idea of making advancement means keeping oneself separate and is against the nature of *bhakti*.

In *uttama-bhakti*, satisfaction comes only by rendering service. There is no restriction in that, and no requirement that one has to become advanced. Here everything happens by the grace of Bhagavān. Of course, one has to accept it. After taking *dikṣā*, one has to accept that one is a servant of the guru and one should cooperate and serve with this mood. The goal of making advancement is a defect on the path of *bhakti*.

Bhagavān gives His mercy to those people who are free from cheating. By His grace, He gives the association of a pure devotee. After that, if one takes shelter of the devotee without any deceptive propensity, then he gets further mercy of Bhagavān. One has to give up attachment to this material body, which is temporary and basically the food for dogs or vultures. If a person dies and you throw the dead body on the street, the dogs or vultures will eat it. As long as one has the feeling of "I" and "mine" as separate from the guru, one cannot get the grace of Bhagavān. Taking shelter of the guru without any motive means not giving importance to this body. Only such people get the mercy of Bhagavān.



**QUESTION:** You are describing a very high level of *uttama-bhakti*, where after the point of surrender there are no more material desires, etc., but what about my case, where I still feel material desires, what can I do?

**ANSWER:** Continue with your service and chant. Do not become disheartened.

**QUESTION:** I am wondering about how many lifetimes this will take. Once you said that if a disciple surrenders, then this is his last life, and if he does not surrender, then there is no question of relationship with the guru at all. Is there any hope?

**ANSWER:** The main prerequisite of a disciple is simplicity and straightforwardness. That means he should neither have any deceptive propensity nor any hatred, dislike, or disrespect for Kṛṣṇa or the guru. The fact that a disciple has taken to the path of *bhakti* is itself the mercy of Bhagavān. If a disciple is simple-hearted and continues to serve, then he will progress and all the impurities of the heart will go away by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

**QUESTION:** How can one progress in devotion?

**ANSWER:** You have to first begin.

## 87. Protection of Devotees

**QUESTION:** Kṛṣṇa says that He protects the devotees, but still there are dangerous situations in the world, like war and diseases. To what extent should a devotee ask Bhagavān for special protection? For example, there is the *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* in the *Bhāgavatam*. Should one make a special endeavor to ask Bhagavān for protection or is it automatically granted when one surrenders?

**ANSWER:** There is no need for making a special effort or reciting *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* or any of these things, because the name of Bhagavān itself is powerful. If you just remember Kṛṣṇa, it is sufficient. Everything is contained within the Holy Name and there is no need to do any special *anuṣṭhāna* for protection. The *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* simply contains the names of Bhagavān.

**QUESTION:** Why is the *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* there in the *Bhāgavatam*, if it is actually not needed for devotees?

ANSWER: It is for people with material desires, not for devotees.

QUESTION: Is every devotee granted protection of Bhagavān, no matter on what level of surrender he is, or is it only granted to pure or very elevated devotees?

ANSWER: Bhagavān protects every devotee.

QUESTION: What does this protection of Bhagavān look like? Does he protect the body of the devotee or his possessions, or is it to be understood as spiritual protection?

ANSWER: Bhagavān protects the *bhāva*, or love, of the devotee, not his material body. The material body is temporary. It will be finished one day or another. For its protection He has given knowledge. If you fall sick, then take the prescribed medicine, if you are hungry, then eat food, and if there are any other problems, then counteract them by using your hands, legs, and intelligence. Bhagavān does not bring food to you if you are hungry, since He is not a servant like that. For that He has given you sufficient equipment and knowledge, but what He protects is the *prīti*, which He gives Himself. That is the actual protection He gives.

You might have seen a picture in which Kṛṣṇa is bringing milk for Rūpa Gosvāmī. He does not do that for everyone. A particular instance may be there, but it is not that every day He is bringing milk for someone.

QUESTION: I would like to know about this verse in *Bhagavad Gītā* (9.22):

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

“Those people who are exclusively devoted to Me, always meditate on Me and worship Me. I supply the needs of such devotees ever united with Me and preserve what they possess.” (Gītā 9.22)

Should this verse also be understood in the way that Kṛṣṇa supplies one's spiritual well-being?

ANSWER: Yes, *yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham* does not mean that Kṛṣṇa will carry food grains for you. The common man understands it like that. But He is supplying that for everybody anyway.

## 88. Protection of Bhakti-mārga

**QUESTION:** On one side, we hear that unqualified people have entered the path of *bhakti*, but on the other side, it is said that it is a defect if someone approaches the guru or someone who knows about Kṛṣṇa and that person does not give knowledge. How to protect the path of *bhakti* and also give knowledge?

**ANSWER:** The guru has to be careful and should only give knowledge to sincere people. Those who only want to exploit *bhakti* for material gain should not be entertained. There is no defect if knowledge is withheld from them.

## 89. Rasas

**QUESTION:** What is *parakīya-bhāva*?

**ANSWER:** In *vraja-bhakti*, or *uttama-bhakti*, one has natural attraction. For example, there is a natural attraction between a man and a woman. The relationship with a prostitute is different; it is just business. The natural attraction between a man and a woman when they are in love and not married is stronger than when they are married. In marriage, it is fifty-fifty at best; 50% attraction and 50% business. They stay together as long as their mutual desires are being fulfilled; otherwise, they get a divorce. This example of love between an unmarried young boy and young girl is given to explain *uttama-bhakti*, because *uttama-bhakti* is based upon *rāga*. That is called *parakīya-bhāva*.

Another definition of *parakīya* is "the Supreme is one's own." It means that God belongs to the devotee. *Parakīya-rasa* is the *paramśreya* (the ultimate goal).

In *parakīya-rasa* there is no sex involved. It means to serve without any selfish desire and is the highest limit of surrender and selfless service possible.

**QUESTION:** How can a *gr̥hastha* develop *mañjarī-bhāva*<sup>6</sup> (or *uttama bhakti*, *vraja bhakti*, or pure devotion)

<sup>6</sup> A *mañjarī* is a young girl in Vraja, devoted to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. She assists the Gopī associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

ANSWER: *Mañjarī-bhāva* does not depend on the body or any other designation. To attain *mañjarī-bhāva*, you have to surrender to the guru and be truthful. The *gopīs* are householders. *Mañjarī-bhāva* is meant for all human beings, and it does not matter whether one is a *grhastha* or a renunciate. *Mañjarī-bhāva* is a consciousness. You have to intensely desire it and want it, and then you will get it

## 90. Realization

QUESTION: Jīva Gosvāmī is talking about getting direct *darśana* of Bhagavān, *sākṣāt hari*. He makes a statement here in SB 1.2.20:

*evam prasanna-manaso  
bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ  
bhagavat-tattva-vijñānam  
mukta-saṅgasya jāyate*

“In this way realization about Bhagavān manifests to a person who is free from all material desires and is delighted in mind, by engaging in *bhakti* to Bhagavān.”

*Sākṣādharo manasi bahir*—I was wondering what he means by *manasi* or *manasi bahir*?

ANSWER: There are three features of the Absolute: Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. Therefore there are three types of *sādhakas*: *jñānīs*, *yogīs*, and *bhaktas*. The realization of *jñānīs* and *yogīs* is only internal, and they do not have an external realization. But the realization of a devotee is both internal and external. That is *manasi bahir*.

For a devotee, there is no need to do *sāadhanā* for this. The description of *sāadhanā* is one, but it applies to all three types of *sādhakas*. However, all the steps of *sāadhanā* may not be applicable to each *sādhaka*. To realize through the path of *jñāna* or *yoga*, one has to go through these steps. In *bhakti*, however, from the very beginning, when one gets *dikṣā* and has attraction to the guru, there is realization.

This is said in the second verse of the *Bhāgavatam*:

*dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo ninnatsarāṇām satām  
vedyaḥ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaḥ tāpa-trayonmūlanam  
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kim vā parair īśvaraḥ  
sadyo hṛdy avarudhayate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śūsrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*



“In this book, the supreme religion of saintly-hearted non-envious people, which is free from all cheating propensities, is described. The Absolute Reality which gives auspiciousness and uproots the threefold miseries is to be known. There is no need of any other scripture since the great sage Vyāsa has completed this beautiful *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. As soon as one desires to hear it, Bhagavān becomes arrested in the heart of such a saintly person.” (SB 1.1.2)

Realization comes immediately—there is no delay in it. In *uttama-bhakti* there are no steps, such as those described in SB 1.2.20, because *uttama-bhakti* does not come by *sādhana*. It comes by Grace. When the heart of the guru becomes compassionate and melts, then Bhagavān’s heart also melts. Then the disciple gets the potency, which gives realization. Then there is also a relationship with Bhagavān directly. There is no extra *sādhana* needed. One just needs to perform service to the guru without any motive.

QUESTION: On the path of *uttama-bhakti*, there is no *sādhana* and *sādhyā*, as on other paths?

ANSWER: This description is there just to show that *bhakti* is also a path like other paths. Therefore, Jīva Gosvāmī has to explain like this. But in *uttama-bhakti* there are no steps like that.

QUESTION: What does it mean, as it was explained yesterday, that if one desires to serve Bhagavān, then the spiritual energy will manifest through one’s senses?

ANSWER: When one takes shelter of the guru, learns from him, and serves him sincerely without any personal motives, then by the grace of Bhagavān and guru, the spiritual potency descends upon him. These objects, such as the name, form, qualities, etc., of Bhagavān are not material. They cannot be realized with material senses, but when Bhagavān is pleased, then He reveals them. Just as we see material objects and have material experiences, in the same way Bhagavān Himself makes those transcendental objects available.

Just as the mind is always engaged in some materialistic activity and has an immense capacity to imagine things or comprehend material objects, in the same way, when that spiritual potency is given, the same mind is able to comprehend transcendental things and realize transcendental objects. This happens by Bhagavān’s will if the person is free from offense and engaged in loving service. It is described in the second verse of the *Bhāgavatam* (SB 1.1.2), that when one desires to hear, then Bhagavān immediately becomes

arrested in the heart. It is by His will alone that this happens, but only to a person who is free from offense.

**QUESTION:** How can an *uttamā-bhakta*, while he is here in the material world, experience the spiritual reality? I am always thinking in space and time and that Goloka Vṛndāvana is far away.

**ANSWER:** Īśvara is all pervading, all potent, and situated in His own glory, in His own potency. He is *svarāṭa* (supremely independent), and not dependent on anything. If He is all pervading, then there is no question of Him being somewhere else and not here.

There are two types of consciousness: love and hatred. When there is love, the object is near, and when there is no love the object is very far away.

People do not have a liking for God and want to see something magical because they are impressed by something extraordinary. It is explained that Goloka is very wonderful, very effulgent, millions of miles away. But if you explain that Kṛṣṇa is actually a cowherd boy who is with the cows, and there is cow dung and cow urine in Goloka, then they will think, "Oh, that is just like here." So, who will take interest in that? Therefore scriptures speak in an attractive language and say things, such as, "In Goloka every step is a dance and every word is music." Then people will take interest in it. Since Kṛṣṇa is omnipresent, where is the question of Him going anywhere?

Our vision, however, is very limited, and we can only see small things. If something is very great, we can understand it when it is explained according to our experience and our ability to grasp it. We think that when something is great, it has to be far away. If it is supreme, how can it be on this planet? Therefore, it has to be explained that it is so far away that no airplane can go there, and even if you go with the speed of mind, you cannot reach there, and so on. It is explained like that because of our *bhāva*.

If one has a loving mood, then God is everywhere. Therefore, the *uttamā-bhaktas* can see the spiritual reality of Goloka right here, but if one does not have the *bhāva*, or love, then it is so far away that it is unapproachable.

**QUESTION:** How does one distinguish a transcendental experience from a gross or subtle experience in the mind? And is it true that transcendental experiences are all ever-lasting, like Nārada Muni had the *darśana* of Viṣṇu and never forgot it?

ANSWER: Transcendental experiences will never be forgotten; they stay permanently. A transcendental experience is manifest by the *svarūpa-śakti* (the internal potency of Bhagavān). By Bhagavān's grace, it can also manifest in the material senses. The *svarūpa-śakti* is imposed on the material senses. Viṣṇu is all pervading, but when, by His own grace, He wants to manifest somewhere in front of somebody, then He can do that. Transcendental objects are self-manifest and self-effulgent, and whenever Bhagavān likes, they can manifest and be experienced through the material senses.

QUESTION: In such a case, how is the devotee sure that what he sees is a manifestation of the internal potency of Kṛṣṇa's grace? Should he not have doubts?

ANSWER: There is no doubt about it.

[See also: Seeing Kṛṣṇa]

## 91. Relationships, Social

QUESTION: I am a family man and have to live in family life. I have to deal with people in society, and sometimes I have to go to weddings and birthday parties, but there is only *prajalpa* (mundane talk) going on which has nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa. How should I keep away from it?

ANSWER: How much away do you want to keep? Mahāprabhu's *bhakti* is the greatest revolution that has ever happened in the existence of this universe. It is completely different from all other so-called spiritual processes, which are actually demoniac and completely impractical. In other processes, you have to give up this and give up that, but since God has made this whole universe, then why do you have to give it up? Is He not intelligent? Why does one have to belittle God's creation? He has given us a body and senses, so how will you give them up? Even if you take *sannyāsa*, you will go somewhere and enjoy, because giving up is also for enjoyment. People first try to enjoy, and either they are unsuccessful in their attempts to enjoy or they get fed up with the enjoyment. After this, they look for enjoyment in renunciation, but enjoying or renouncing are two sides of the same coin. *Bhakti* is not like that, it is *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*.

Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, so where will you go away? The whole world belongs to Him. *Anuśīlanam* means all activities, so which activity can you give up?



You have to deal with people, so you also have to maintain relationships with others. You have to be practical, but your mind should be fixed on Kṛṣṇa. Then there is no problem. Mahāprabhu did not give the example of the ideal devotee as some *sannyāsi* who lives in some *āśrama* and has no family. He gave us the example of the *gopīs*, who are in family life. His example is of females and not of males, and women are even more absorbed in so-called family life, because ladies have to take care of the children. They have very little chance even for *sat-saṅga*, whereas men have the freedom to leave the home, go wherever they want, talk, etc. But the *gopīs* are the topmost devotees. That is to show under all circumstances, they are devotees. Therefore, anyone can be a devotee by following their example. The thing is that their minds were always fixed on Kṛṣṇa. In short, Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad Gītā*:

“Therefore, always remember Me and fight. With your mind and intellect fixed on Me, you will undoubtedly attain Me alone.”  
(Gītā 8.7)

Fighting means doing your duties. Kṛṣṇa is not saying, “run away.” The Pāṇḍavas or Vidura were all family oriented. They were also from royal households, and they ruled their kingdom. We all know the difficulties involved in just running a household. So imagine the intricacies in running a kingdom. You would have to face so many problems in the form of enemies, criminals, and the politics within the administration. You wonder how these people could be devotees. When did they get the time to sit down and do *kīrtana* or *japa*? There were always problems to be solved. They were never alone, as they had to have the protection of bodyguards. But they were great devotees because they practiced *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. Every activity was done only for Kṛṣṇa’s sake. They fought only for His sake and made peace also only for His sake. This is what one needs to learn.

*Uttama-bhakti* is the most auspicious process. If you give it up, then certain things will not even develop. This *bhakti* brings light to everything, whether it is art, music, dance, drama, literature, singing, etc. Everything has a practical use in *bhakti*. The Six Gosvāmīs brought forth a revolution in all these fields. If you go to other processes, such as *jñāna-mārga* or *yoga-mārga*, you have to give up all these. But in *uttama-bhakti*, everything is useful. The Gosvāmīs demonstrated this by their example.

**QUESTION:** Is there a more specific relationship or bond in devotee families than in material families?



ANSWER: Material relationships have no bearing on spiritual relationships. Parents should be respected because they are the original teachers. We should respect them and serve them if it is possible for us to do that.

In spiritual life association or relation is based on the guru. It is not influenced by anything else. Even if the parents are devotees, it does not influence one's relationship with the guru. These are two separate things.

Just as in the material world, you have relationships based on parents, mother, father, and other relations. In *bhakti* the relationship is based on the guru.

QUESTION: Most of us have acquaintances in other groups who are also Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, but there are also differences in concepts. How shall we regard and deal with them?

ANSWER: As we are followers of *vaiṣṇava-dharma*, we give respect to everybody, because Bhagavān is there in everyone. We should respect everyone. Otherwise, we will have hatred or attachment, which is not good. We should have neither *rāga* nor *dveṣa*. We should deal with them as much as is necessary, and not more. We can have dealings with them, but we should not support their wrong philosophical conclusions or become attached to them.

Just as I also have to deal with people who are not devotees and who are against the real *dharma*. Dealings must be there. People may be dressed as Vaiṣṇavas, but they may not be Vaiṣṇavas in the true sense of the word. Mostly they are pursuing some material goal. Knowing this, we have to relate with them accordingly.

QUESTION: What if one's family members are not devotees, does one have to minimize contact with them, as well?

ANSWER: You have to deal with them, knowing that they are not devotees. We are in this world, so we have to deal with people. You have to know where you stand and where they stand. Do not get carried away by their understanding and conclusions; otherwise, you will become deviated yourself. Their *saṁskāras* will influence you.

Therefore, it is recommended that you only associate with people of your own group, because their *saṁskāras* are not contrary to your own *saṁskāras*. So what to speak of associating with non-devotees? Even among Vaiṣṇavas we should associate with people of the same

spiritual family. Otherwise, there will always be discrepancies and you have to listen to things that may not be consistent with your philosophy.

**QUESTION:** In such a case it seems better to associate with materialistic people, because then we know that we absolutely do not want to accept their mood, but if we have to associate with semi-spiritual people or semi-Vaiṣṇavas, then it becomes really difficult to sort it out.

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is problematic to deal with such people. Not only that, but, generally, such people are very aggressive. They will even assault and attack, whereas materialistic people have nothing in common with you. They do their thing and do not try to convert you. They may even be respectful.

**QUESTION:** In the *śāstra* it is stated that one should respect one's parents; but what if the parents are against Kṛṣṇa consciousness? In our case, our parents are strict Christians, and it may happen that we have to take care of them, because they are becoming old now. What shall we do?

**ANSWER:** When the parents expect help, you should help them. You should fulfill your duty toward your parents. It does not matter that they have their own concept of religion or do not accept Kṛṣṇa. When they do not expect help, then you do not do anything. A devotee respects and helps every living entity, what to speak of his own parents.

**QUESTION:** When we leave this world, are we leaving alone or together with those who have benefited us, like Dhruva Mahārāja, who left for Vaikuṇṭha together with his mother?

**ANSWER:** This is a specific example, a special case, which does not happen to everybody. In Dhruva's case, his mother had specifically instructed him to go and worship Śrī Viṣṇu. Therefore she was like his guru, his first guru. It was only later on that he got Nārada Muni as his guru. Due to that relationship he thought highly of her.

On our path, we surrender to our guru, and that is our relationship. We are devoted to him only, and that relationship continues.

**QUESTION:** Do those persons who have helped us, like teachers, etc., get some benefit?

ANSWER: If those people appreciate what you are doing now, and they are your supporters and associate with you, then they will also get similar *samskāras* or the consciousness that you have. This is the benefit they get.

QUESTION: What *samskāras* do they get?

ANSWER: It means they will get a consciousness similar to the one the devotee or you may have. It basically means that they will become inclined toward the process of *bhakti*.

QUESTION: Due to family entrapments, it is very difficult to take off on this path.

ANSWER: The fundamental difficulty is that people do not have a proper concept of *bhakti*. Other philosophies are mixed up with it. Therefore, such thoughts that family life, etc., are obstacles on this path, arise in mind. Whether householder or renunciate, both have the right to perform *bhakti*.

We should at least try to get the concept clear about *uttama-bhakti*. Once the concept is clear, then one can decide whether one wants to follow it or not. The obstacle is not the family or anything else, but one's own interest. One must have a very clear understanding of *uttama-bhakti*.

*Bhakti* is *vyāvahārika*, it is practiced here while one is living in this body, and not something done only after death. All other paths describe that if you follow their process, then after death you will get liberation or some enjoyment. When it is *karma-mārga*, then you will go to heaven, and when it is *jñāna-mārga*, then you will become liberated. However, *bhakti* is not something that happens after death. It is practiced here and now. It is for everybody—family man or renunciate. God Himself has created this world, and He does not say that one has to leave this world to become a devotee.

The problem comes because of lack of understanding. On this path, right from the beginning, there is surrender to the guru. Guru and Kṛṣṇa are absolutely one. On the other paths, there is also talk of surrendering to the guru. In *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna says, "I surrender to you." However, that surrender is not the same as what is needed in *uttama-bhakti*. Surrender to the guru and taking shelter of him is just as good as surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Once surrender is done, then there is no separate motive.

On all other paths, there is some separate motive, such as wanting enjoyment or liberation. Therefore, if a guru is accepted, it is done for that motive. So there is no complete oneness with the guru's heart, because one keeps one's selfish motives.

*Bhakti* is not selfish at all. Whatever you do, you do it only for the other's sake (*ānukūlyena anuśīlanam*). Right from the beginning, one's independence is surrendered. In *uttama-bhakti* this injunction that the guru is God is completely applicable. After surrender there is no separatism. When there is no separatism or difference, there is no obstacle for obtaining *bhakti*, because whatever you do, you do it as a devotee, as a follower and disciple. The real meaning of disciple is fulfilled only in *uttama-bhakti*, not on other paths. Here the disciple-guru relationship remains eternal, and the disciple is always a disciple.

When one accepts a guru, then one is no longer independent. When one is not independent, then there are no more independent motives. The family is not an obstacle. Obstacles come when the motives are different, not because of the family or anything else. This point must be grasped properly.

[See also: Devotee's behavior in this world, West]

## 92. Renunciation—Vairāgya, Vratas

**QUESTION:** How useful are renunciation and *vratas* in *bhakti-mārga*? For example, some devotees are doing *mauna-vrata* (vow of silence). Should everyone do that to advance in consciousness?

**ANSWER:** Such *vratas* do not have anything to do with *bhakti*. Thinking, "I want to do something and get some benefit out of it," is an independent thought and a material desire. *Bhakti* means to serve Kṛṣṇa and please Him. However, the majority of the people are *sakāma* (full of material desires). They want to do *vratas*, and the *śāstra* has plenty of recommendations for this, such as, "Do *cāturmāsya*, bathe in Rādhā Kuṇḍa, and do *parikramā*." Among the thousands of people who are doing these things, there may be one or two interested in hearing more. Kṛṣṇa keeps His path clean of unwanted people. The aim of all these *vratas* is to bring you to the level of surrender.

**QUESTION:** How far can renunciation help one in spiritual life?



ANSWER: It does not help one at all. God has given us body and senses, which have certain functions. They should be used in His service. This is *yukta-vairāgya*. For example, our eyes are meant for seeing. What is the use if one pokes them with a needle? Then one is not able to do service anymore. Rather, one becomes a burden for others. How is this useful for spiritual life? How does this help one to progress? If this were the case, then deaf and dumb people would be spiritually more advanced than others. But this is not the case. *Vairāgya*, renunciation, does not have anything to do with spiritual life. You should balance everything. *Yukta* means having a balance in eating, sleeping, sense pleasure, etc.

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain how in verse SB 1.2.7 *jñāna* and *vairāgya* happen? I have heard that it comes almost automatically if one does devotional service. Is that true?

ANSWER:

*vāsudeve bhagavati  
bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ  
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ  
jñānaṁ ca yad ahaitukam*

“When *bhakti* is performed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it very quickly gives detachment and causeless knowledge.”

*Bhakti* means to do *ānukūlya*, or favorable service. When you serve someone, then only can you understand this person. You cannot get perfect knowledge about someone without doing service. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad Gītā*, “I am understood only by *bhakti*”:

*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti  
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ  
tato mām tattvato jñātṛvā  
viśate tad-anantaram*

“Through that supreme devotion, one fully realizes Me in truth, what and who I am. Then, after knowing Me in reality, one enters into Me.” (*Gītā* 18.55)

If one is performing *bhakti*, then one will know. Furthermore, without knowing, you cannot do *bhakti* or favorable service, but one will not do service unless one has *bhakti*. Otherwise, why would one serve somebody? You are not interested in serving someone unless you know that the person is worth serving. Then you have devotion. So, there is no question of *bhakti* without knowledge. *Bhakti* and knowledge are not two separate things. They are together.

If you want to do *bhakti*, then you need to give your mind and heart to it. You need to give up your other interests that are not supportive of *bhakti*. If your interest is somewhere else, other than *bhakti*, then you will not be able to engage in *bhakti* sincerely. Then in the name of *bhakti*, you may do some business, cheating or whatever, but you will not do service. So if you have to do service, then you have to give up some enjoyment, some sense gratification. If you are fully devoted, then you are fully renounced. Then you have no interest in anything else. No interest in going here and there, not even participating in so-called spiritual activities, like going to this *darśana*, for this *parikramā*, this bath, *kumbhamelā*, etc. If you are fixed in your service, then naturally, renunciation is there.

If you have to do service properly, then you have to have knowledge. Without knowledge, you cannot do service. Even simple things, like feeding a cow, you have to know how to do it properly. If your mind is somewhere else, then you will not do it properly, or you want to do it quickly and run away. In the daytime, there are hired servants in the *gośālā* and their interest is in finishing as fast as they can and then leave. This is not *bhakti*.

Therefore, if *bhakti* is there, then naturally there is perfect knowledge and perfect renunciation, and you are situated on a devotional platform. *Jñāna* and *vairāgya* are not even by-products of *bhakti*; they are compulsory.

*Bhakti* is knowledge, and it cannot be done in ignorance. A person who is in ignorance has no need to do it. When you are doing *bhakti*, then naturally you will understand. Then you know Kṛṣṇa, guru, or whomever you may serve. You know him much more than you would if you were not doing service. Only when you understand the mood of the person you are serving can you actually do service. If somebody is not doing service, then how will he know the person, his behavior, and his mood? This is what knowledge means.

Besides knowing the person, we need to know how to serve that person properly. If you just sit down like a *yogī* or *jñānī*, then you do not need all this knowledge. If you do service in the *gośālā*, then you have to know how to sweep, feed the cows, cut the grass, and how to take care of the cows and calves. There are so many things that you will need to learn. If you have a sincere interest, then you will learn it.

**QUESTION:** We have heard that if one is to practice the *bhakti* philosophy, then one should give up everything and just do devotional practices. Still, in the West we meet people who have this concept and it is difficult to explain to them that they should

stay where they are and just practice *bhakti*. Is there some way to convince these people?

ANSWER: You just have to explain to them what *bhakti* is. If somebody has a misconception, you have to dispel that. Moreover, it is not practical to give up everything else.

## 93. Respect

QUESTION: Today I was reading that one should not step on the shadow of a cow, a *brāhmaṇa*, the preceptor, or the guru. Does it mean that one should not come close to those personalities or is there another meaning to this?

ANSWER: It is out of respect. Just as you do not step on a photo of a respectable person, in the same way, you do not step on the shadow.

QUESTION: But what are we to do in the case of the cows?

ANSWER: When we are serving, then it is different. Cows, *brāhmaṇas*, and the guru are to be respected, and therefore stepping on their shadows is disrespectful.

In case of the cow, when you are doing service, it is unavoidable. This rule in relation to the cow can be observed when you are not serving them. However, in case of the guru, one should follow this rule even when doing service. Otherwise, it becomes disrespectful.

Just as when you are doing deity worship, you should not push the seat on which you sit with your foot. Sometimes people do that, but this is also disrespectful to the deity.

The relationship with the guru or Kṛṣṇa is always that of the servant, and one should always maintain this attitude. This is the proper etiquette. If one transgresses this etiquette, then one's disrespect will increase. Rules are given to guard against such a danger.

## 94. Responsibility

QUESTION: When I try to be dependent, then I give up my sense of responsibility. How am I to find the correct balance?

ANSWER: When you take shelter or give up your independence, then you take on more responsibility instead of becoming free from responsibility, because being a servant means being responsible.

*Bhakti* means action. *Bhakti* is not inaction, as is the path of liberation. In *bhakti*, a devotee does more work than other people, and there is no holiday for him. He is responsible like Kṛṣṇa, who says that He is always working, although He has nothing to achieve. Viṣṇu means one who maintains, and a person who maintains has to do it all the time. He has no holidays. A devotee also feels responsible. A real servant means that he feels more responsible than the master, because he wants to serve the master and relieve him of his responsibilities. The only thing is that the servant is not independent; so he remains surrendered, takes on responsibility, and works.

## 95. Ruci (Taste)

QUESTION: Is this *ruci*, which is the impelling force in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, something given or can it be acquired by *sādhana* or in another way?

ANSWER: *Uttama-bhakti* is acquired only by the grace of a devotee or Kṛṣṇa. Any other process cannot bestow it. So, *ruci* is also attained by that grace. Even if one has got a little *ruci*, then that is the symptom that he is on this path of *bhakti*. Even a little contact delivers the person, if he is not offensive.

QUESTION: What is the difference between *kathā-ruci* and the stage of *ruci* that comes after *anartha-nivṛtti*?

ANSWER: *Kathā-ruci* is the primary stage and this *ruci*, which comes after *anartha-nivṛtti*, is the ripened one, for you have become free from *anarthas*, are very fixed, and completely absorbed in *bhakti*.

QUESTION: On the path of *vaidhī-bhakti*, there are stages from *śraddhā* to *prema*. How is it in *rāgānugā-bhakti*?

ANSWER: The basic difference between these two paths is how one takes to the process. In *uttama-bhakti*,<sup>7</sup> or *rāgānugā*, one begins because one likes *bhakti*. *Ruci* means liking the words of God.

<sup>7</sup> Both, *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā* are *uttama-bhakti*, but Mahārāja uses the term *uttamā* only for *rāgānugā*.



If one likes God, then one will also like everything related to Him. When a person has a liking, he feels inspired, naturally. By the grace of Bhagavān a person becomes inspired. Otherwise, the steps are the same in *vaidhī* as well as in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. The process or the activities are also the same, such as *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, etc. The only difference is that in *uttama-bhakti*, the person likes it, and therefore does not need any injunction, and he remains fully satisfied. He has a guru, which means he has everything. Then his mind is not running here and there, demanding, "I want this, I want that." This is the difference.

The seeds of *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā-bhakti* are different. The *ruci* that you experience in the beginning is not the same *ruci* that is described after *niṣṭhā*. This beginning *ruci* just brings you to the process.

QUESTION: So the *ruci* we have in the beginning is not the intense *ruci* experienced before *āśakti*?

ANSWER: No, that kind of *ruci* is separate. The word is the same, but the meaning is different. One is the beginning step and the other is an advanced stage.

QUESTION: For those who do not have *ruci* in *rāga-mārga* but still have some aspiration to follow it, Jīva Gosvāmī says that they should follow *vaidhī*, but that it should be mixed with *rāga-mārga*. How should one proceed in that way?

ANSWER: The qualification for *rāgānugā* is natural liking. If you do not have that, then it is to be mixed. But there has to be some liking. Such a person takes to the process of *rāgānugā*, but there are some differences in its execution. *Vaidhī* is mainly following *pāñcarātri-vidhi*, whereas *rāgānugā* is mainly *nāma-kīrtana*, *śravaṇa*, etc. He will take to *rāga-mārga*, although he only has little liking for it. Having a desire to attain that natural liking, he will follow the *sādhana* of *rāgānugā* in a *vaidhī* manner. That means he will follow on the basis of the *śāstric* injunction. This is the mixture, some liking is there, and he follows the process according to the discipline of the *śāstra*. This means he does certain prescribed activities with a desire to attain *rāga*. When he gets *rāga*, he will do every action out of *rāga*.

QUESTION: And what was he explaining about the meaning of *ekī-kṛtya*?

**ANSWER:** *Ekī-kṛtya* (making two as one) means that he follows *rāgānugā* according to *vaidhī*. Some liking is there, so it is considered as one part of *rāgānugā*. He does chanting, hearing, etc., as in *rāgānugā-bhakti*, but on the basis of *śāstra*. In that sense, it is *ekī-kṛtya*; making the two as one.

In *rāgānugā-bhakti*, service, such as to the guru or cows, is very important. These are not generally part of *vaidhī-mārga*, where the prominence is given to *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi*, or deity worship, as they have in other *sampradāyas*. They perform those activities on the basis of scriptural injunction. In *rāgānugā* you also may not have a liking in the beginning. For example, you perform cow service, but without liking it. You do it for the cows' pleasure knowing that they will be happy. You have a desire to achieve a natural liking for the service or else you have heard that it is good, so you start doing it. If you are sincerely doing it, then you will start liking it. Then your actions become natural. In the beginning, you are doing it because of some injunction that says by doing this you will get something, but later, you naturally like it and then you do not desire anything from the service.

**QUESTION:** So *paricaryā* (service) is really a service, which is meant for the pleasure of the guru or the person you are serving.

**ANSWER:** Yes. *Vaidhī* is limited to certain activities. In *rāgānugā* it is service, which may include every action; it is *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. *Anuśīlanam* includes all activities.

**QUESTION:** Does one naturally develop a specific liking for a certain devotional activity when one follows the process, or does the guru also specifically direct it?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* means that you come under the fold of guru. He is the key. In *rāgānugā*, before spontaneity comes, you have to cooperate. That is the first step, because spontaneous liking is not an easy thing. It is not *sādhya*; it is not within your means. Whether you like something or not is not within your control. *Bhakti* cannot be generated by any amount of practice; it does not come like that. It comes by the blessings of the guru. So, the first step is to cooperate with him. When you start cooperating, then you will understand what it means to do *ānukūlya*. When you start doing that, then it will become spontaneous.

Although people think that if one performs *sādhana*-*bhakti*, then one will attain perfection in *bhakti*, it does not happen this way in

*rāgānugā-bhakti*. The secret is that you have to follow the guru. This is what you may not find written everywhere in the *śāstra*. However, this is the most essential principle that people miss and they get lost, although *śāstra* is open and surrender to the guru is clearly defined. People do not understand the real key to *bhakti*. They read one description of *bhakti*, such as of *śravaṇa*, or they read the example of Haridāsa Ṭhākura's chanting, and they start chanting 100 rounds or doing *parikramā* or observing *Nirjalā Ekādaśī*, or some other such activity. Even though they go on doing that, they achieve nothing. The basic thing in *bhakti* is to give up one's independent mentality. In the material world, everybody is working independently. When you take to *bhakti*, you cannot perform it independently, and if you do, it will not bring you to perfection.

[This is the key point that Mahārāja stresses in most of his answers again and again. So, the answer to the question is: Once you have a liking for the guru, you will happily do anything for him.]

QUESTION: Does *śūśruṣā* mean the desire to serve or the desire to hear?

ANSWER: It has both meanings, as service begins with hearing. When you serve, you get the desire to hear. In the nine types of devotional service, hearing is the first one:

*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ  
smaraṇam pāda-sevanam  
arcanaṁ vandanam dāsyam  
sakhyam ātma-nivedanam*

"Devotion to Śrī Viṣṇu is of nine types: hearing about Śrī Viṣṇu, singing about Him, remembering Him, serving His feet, worshipping Him, reciting prayers, being a servant, being a friend, and surrendering one's self." (SB 7.5.23)

However, it has to be heard from a *mahat* (a pure devotee of Bhagavān) and not from professional reciters. For example, when you want to drink milk, you want to drink pure milk. If there is poison or some impurities in it, then it will harm your health. In the same way, one has to hear from those who are devotees of Bhagavān. If you hear from professional people, then you will develop desires like them, thinking, "He is preaching and attracting so many followers. I also want to be like him." Instead of developing interest in Kṛṣṇa, you will develop interest in that which is forbidden, such as, "I can make so much money, and then I can live comfortably."

These desires will come. That is not the outcome of *kathā-ruci*. This type of *ruci* is for your own self. That is what happens when people hear a professional speaker. They want to become like them.

**QUESTION:** In the beginning of *Bhakti Sandarbha*, there are some verses, beginning with *śāstra vai pumsām*, and Jīva Gosvāmī is making the point that *ekāntika śreya* is to develop *ruci*, or specifically *ruci* in *hari-kathā*. Could Mahārāja elaborate on this point?

**ANSWER:** A person has two types of *bhāva*, or temperaments: One is attachment and the other is dislike, *rāga* and *dveṣa*. When you like a person, then you like everything about him. You want to hear about him, and you see all good qualities in him. When you do not like somebody, then you take pleasure in criticizing and finding faults in him.

In the material world, people generally do not have a natural interest in hearing the *kathā* of Bhagavān. So, if by other's preaching or association, or by engaging in some religious activities, one comes to the level of liking *kathā-ruci*, then that is the *śreya* for him, because this will lead him to the ultimate welfare.

Therefore, Jīva Gosvāmī says that *kathā-ruci* is always the first step in spiritual life. The same thing applies in the material world. When you like to do something, then you are interested in hearing about it. No matter if it is some mundane activity, business, sport, or whatever, if you like it, you want to hear about it. If you do not have an interest in something, then you do not want to hear about it. Therefore, he said that *krṣṇa-kathā-ruci* is the *ekāntika śreya* (the ultimate welfare). Once you start liking it, then you want to hear more, and from hearing, your interest in the subject will grow.

**QUESTION:** These verses seem to also indicate that you will develop *ruci* automatically by hearing about Kṛṣṇa.

**ANSWER:** It does not say that. It says that this is the ultimate, the highest attainment that can be expected.

**QUESTION:** There is a verse here:

*dharmah svanuṣṭhitah pumsām  
viśvaksena-kathāsu yaḥ  
notpādayed yadi ratim  
śrama eva hi kecalam*



“If a human being executes his duty properly but that does not generate attachment to the stories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then his labor is useless.” (SB 1.2.8)

ANSWER: After that, he says:

śuśrūṣoḥ śraddadhānasya  
vāsudeva-kathā-ruciḥ  
syān mahat-sevayā viprāḥ  
punya-tīrtha-niṣevanāt

“O *vipra*, a faithful person, desiring to hear—by dwelling in or visiting a holy place—develops taste in *vāsudeva-kathā* by rendering service to a great devotee.” (SB 1.2.16)

This taste comes by *mahat-sevā* (service to a great devotee). Jīva Gosvāmī says that the ultimate purpose in following *varṇāśrama-dharma* is that you will come to have *kathā-ruci*; otherwise, it is as useless as anything else. What he is trying to say is that the purpose of *dharma* is not to get some material gain from it. Nārada Muni also says that.

QUESTION: I mean to say that when we take shelter of the guru and perform activities under his direction, like *sādhana-bhakti* ...

ANSWER: Then that will be supreme, that is the *para dharmo* (SB 1.2.6):

sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo  
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje  
ahaituky apratihātā  
yayātmā suprasīdati

“That is indeed the supreme duty of humanity which leads to causeless, unobstructed *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa. The self is completely satisfied by this *bhakti*.”

QUESTION: In the beginning, there may not be so much *ruci*. So my question is: If one is properly serving his guru, then will that taste develop as a by-product of that service?

ANSWER: That is what he says in SB 1.2.16: When one desires to serve, then *ruci* will come.

QUESTION: But he seems to indicate here that this is the distinguishing feature of *para-dharma*. Could Mahārāja explain that?

ANSWER: In normal *dharma*, which is *varṇāśrama-dharma*, a person does not develop attachment to Bhagavān. He is mainly interested in material enjoyment in this life and the next. Ultimately, he can think of getting *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*, but not of developing attachment or serving Bhagavān. When the person has *kathā-ruci*, then he likes Bhagavān naturally and likes to serve. This is superior, and this is what he said: *sa vai pumsām paro dharma yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*, this is *para-dharma*. The other one is not *para-dharma*; that is normal, *apara-dharma*. That is based on *mātsarya* (envy), because there is *rāga* and *dveṣa* involved. And this *para-dharma* is free from *mātsarya*—*sa vai pumsām paro dharma* (SB 1.2.6), *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām* (SB 1.1.2). A person becomes free from envy only in *bhakti*. In all other religious activities, a person has an envious and selfish nature.

QUESTION: There is a reference in *Bhakti Sandarbha* in the commentary to *aupapattika śruti pramāṇa*. Could Mahārāja clarify what that means?

ANSWER: He is giving *pramāṇa* (proofs) from *śruti* (Veda) and logic. *Aupapattika* means "logical". When you perform materialistic activities and get results, those results will be lost after some time. In the same way, if you go to the heavenly planets, it is also temporary. Therefore, any benefit that one gets from *dharma* is useless if it does not give you *kathā-ruci*, which is the only *ekāntika śreya*. Therefore, he is giving *pramāṇa* from the *śruti*. But not only just the *śruti* says it; there is also logic to it, which is called *aupapattika*.

## 96. Sādhana

QUESTION: As far as our *sādhana* is concerned, how should we perform it?

ANSWER: *Sādhana*—you have the *mantra*, you chant that, follow the basic principles, such as not eating food that is not offered to Bhagavān, you have to do some worship, etc.

*dharmān anyān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ bhaja viśvasan  
yādṛśī yādṛśī śraddhā  
siddhir bhavati tādṛśī*

"Abandoning all other duties, worship Me alone with faith, because one's perfection is in accordance with one's faith."  
(*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.61)

This verse is similar to that in *Bhagavad Gītā* (18.66), but the second part of the verse says that perfection is based on your *śraddhā*. As is your *śraddhā*, so is the result. If your *śraddhā* is material, then the result is also material. If your *śraddhā* is transcendental, based on an understanding of the *śāstra*, then perfection also comes in a transcendental way.

Some confusion can arise, when we talk about *sādhana*. In normal terms, *sādhana* means that you perform an action, and the result will come accordingly. *Sādhana* means the cause that will produce a particular result. But in *bhakti*, the word *sādhana* is not used in this way. This is where the confusion comes. We have the idea that if I chant 64 rounds, then I will get a certain result. It does not work like that. You may chant one round or not even one round and you can get a result that you may not get even after chanting 128 rounds. *Bhakti* is not anything material. It is not like, if you use one spoonful of sugar, then it will become this much sweet, and if you double the amount of sugar, then it will be that much sweet.

*Sarva-dharmān parityajya* means to surrender everything. First, you have to surrender (*śaraṇāgati*, *prapatti*), and after that, everything is *sādhana*. It is not that just chanting is *sādhana*, and if you go to your shop, it is not *sādhana*. This is what was being described in *ātmā-nivedana*, that once you have surrendered, then after that, everything is *sādhana*.

The consciousness of surrender and servitorship should be there. If you have *nirguṇa-śraddhā*, then the result will also be *nirguṇa*. When you have *nirguṇa-śraddhā* then *bhajana-kriyā* will also be *nirguṇa*, and then there will be *anartha-nivṛtti*.

If the *śraddhā* is not *nirguṇa*, then your understanding is based on the material *guṇas*. Then the result will be material. If the action is not performed devotionally, then you will get a material reaction instead of a transcendental result.

Just as *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam* includes all activities, not just specific ones, so too, is *sādhana* not limited to a few actions such as chanting or *kīrtana*.

**QUESTION:** So the activity itself doesn't create the transcendental result, but rather it is the motivation and mood one has while performing the activity that is important?

ANSWER: Yes, especially when we are talking about *rāgānugā-bhakti*. We are not talking about *vaidhī-bhakti*, where you can perform some action and go to *Vaikuṇṭha*. That is not considered as *uttama-bhakti*. *Bhakti* means following in the footsteps of *Bhagavān*'s eternal devotees. *Bhakti* brings unity.

Otherwise, again it would become like *jñāna-mārga*, where you do your things and go about your own business. If that is your motivation for doing *bhakti*, then you just want *mukti*. That is not *bhakti*. This path of *uttama-bhakti* depends upon following the guru. It is not independent. That is the meaning of *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. Kṛṣṇa spoke this verse also in the *Bhāgavatam* also.

QUESTION: Is it only after one surrenders to the guru that it will become clear what we should do?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What are you supposed to think or focus your mind on during *go-sevā*? Because after some time it becomes mechanical and the mind wanders.

ANSWER: In *bhakti* there is *sādhana* and *sādhyā*, the practicing stage and the perfected stage. Practice (*sādhana*) is performed with the senses and the mind. As it is explained in the *Gītā* 8.7: *mām anusmara yudhya ca*, you have to remember Kṛṣṇa and also work.

Both the mind and the body have to be engaged in the practice (*sādhana*). If it is just the body and not the mind, then it becomes mechanical. On the other hand, if you just use the mind and do not serve physically, then the mind will wander after some time. Both complement each other. You perform physical service, and with the mind you serve by remembering Kṛṣṇa. You have to remember that you are doing service for the pleasure of *Bhagavān*.

Even if they are cows, they should be thought of as worshipable like Kṛṣṇa. With this mentality, it will not become mechanical.

This inspiration comes by the grace of *Bhagavān*. When you have this inspiration and keep this consciousness, then you get further inspiration from *Bhagavān*. It takes time. How long it takes for one to get into this consciousness effortlessly cannot be said. That will vary from person to person, but our effort is to do the *sevā* with devotional consciousness and not just mechanically. That is what *sādhana*, or practice, means.



This *bhāva* has to be practiced with the senses along with the mind. The basis of the world is the mind. Whether in material or spiritual existence, the mind is the key factor. If you apply the mind materially, then it remains in the material world, and if you apply it spiritually, then it becomes the cause of entering the spiritual world.

As it is said in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi  
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ  
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau  
svayam eva spuhraty adaḥ*

“Therefore the Name and attributes of Kṛṣṇa cannot be apprehended by the material senses. But when a person becomes inclined to render service, then Kṛṣṇa’s Name appears on the tongue by Itself.” (BRS 1.2.234)

When one wants to chant, then the Name appears on the tongue, because the Name is not material. You cannot obtain Bhagavān or His Name through effort. First, the inspiration comes to perform service, and when you do that service, try to keep your consciousness devotional. This frame of mind should be cultivated regularly.

## 97. Sādhu-saṅga

**QUESTION:** Sometimes I feel a little bit hopeless about my prospect of advancement in spiritual life, but I also feel that maybe I can develop good impressions, or *samskāras*, for my next life. Is this the wrong mentality?

**ANSWER:** It is not proper to be hopeless. First of all, the human body is only given so that one can advance in spiritual life. And secondly, if one gets association of a saint or a devotee of Bhagavān, then that itself signifies that one’s time of existence in the material world has come to an end.

*bhavāpavargo bhramato yadā bhavej  
janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samāgamah  
sat-saṅgamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau  
parāvareṣe tvayi jāyate matiḥ*

“When the cycle of birth and death for a wandering soul is near, then he gets the association of a devotee (*sat-saṅga*), O Śrī Acyutā, and when there is association with a devotee, then only his mind

becomes turned towards You to perform devotion, O Lord of all being, material and spiritual.” (SB 10.51.53)

Otherwise, why would Bhagavān give *sat-saṅga*? There is no other purpose for it. *Sat-saṅga* has only one purpose: That one is now ready to leave the material world. If God wants this, and He has given a human body and the opportunity to have saintly association, then there is no reason for one to be hopeless. Rather, one should be very enthusiastic that finally one has attained this opportunity. God has given us some freedom to think, to make decisions, to act, to acquire knowledge, etc. We should make proper use of all we have been given. We have this human body, and it has the facility to hear and understand the *śāstra*, to associate, serve, etc. Having received this rare opportunity, we should never lose it but instead make good use of it. That should be our way of thinking.

People in the material world never become hopeless. They continuously remain in the material world, although getting frustrated at every step. They never think, “I am becoming hopeless, so let me take to the spiritual path.” They are always fixed. We should take their example and remain fixed on our path. It is a matter of your mentality or consciousness.

Yesterday, a lady named Suśīla, who was a follower of Mahātmā Gandhi, died. When she met Gandhi in her young age, he told her not to marry but instead serve the nation. All of her life she followed this instruction. Although a girl, she dedicated herself and served. She was not a learned scholar nor did she get much association, but just because she had faith in the words of Gandhi, she took it to heart.

Spiritual life can be compared to this, although it is not of the same quality. It is superior, but if such a thing is possible in the material world, then it should be much more so for a spiritual cause. So there is no reason for us to be hopeless; rather, we should be very enthusiastic and make use of such a rare opportunity that has been granted to us.

QUESTION: We studied the verse:

śuśrūṣoḥ śraddadhānasya  
vāsudeva-kathā-ruciḥ  
syān mahat-sevayā viprāḥ  
puṇya-tīrtha-niṣevanāt

“O *vipra*, a faithful person desiring to hear—by dwelling in or visiting a holy place—develops taste in *vāsudeva-kathā* by rendering service to a great devotee.” (SB 1.2.16)

Is it that by rendering service to the *dhāma*, one gets association, or is it that one just comes to the *dhāma* and then, by chance, gets *sādhū-saṅga*, and then *śraddhā* and everything else develops?

ANSWER: Both are possible. It is possible that one goes to a holy place for some work and then meets the *sādhū*s, because *mahat-puruṣas* reside in holy places, or it can happen that one gets the association of a *sādhū* by rendering service to the *dhāma*. One can also get *sādhū-saṅga* independently, as in the case of Nārada. He did not go to any *puṇya-tīrtha* (holy place). He was in his own house, but he got association.

However, both, the speaker and the audience should be qualified, and then only will *sādhū-saṅga* be effective. The speaker should be *mahat*. *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* is only effective when spoken by a *mahat*, and the person who hears must also be qualified. He should be simple-hearted and not offensive. Otherwise, so many people come to a holy place, and there are so many *pravacanas* (lectures), people are listening with rapt attention, but there is no effect. They do not take to pure devotion. Rather, the effect is just the opposite. They do everything else other than devotion. This happens because both are not qualified.

In the case of Nārada, he heard from qualified people and he was also qualified himself, as described in SB 1.5.24:

*te mayy apetākhila-cāpale 'rbhake  
dānte 'dhyta-kṛīḍanake 'nuvartini  
cakruḥ kṛpāṁ yadyapi tulya-darśanāḥ  
śuśrūṣamāṇe munayo 'lpa-bhāṣiṇi*

“Though a mere child, I was free from all children frolics, was quite calm and submissive, spoke little, and remained aloof from playthings. Though viewing all alike, the sages were particularly kind to me and blessed me, who did various kinds of services to them.”

Nārada was free from all frivolousness; he was self-controlled, very quiet, and not talkative. Therefore, although the sages were unanimous, they gave him their mercy. When the qualification is there, then the blessing is effective.

What to speak of people who come to Vrindavan and listen to *kathā*—you should see the people who live here. They accept a guru, take *dīkṣā*, and chant. You see them going around chanting, hearing *kathā*, and residing in this holy place, but they have no faith in the guru, God, or the *dhāma*. They are only interested in wealth and sense objects. There is no effect on them. Rather, there is the opposite effect. This happens because there is no qualification. Therefore, the Name, *dhāma*, and *sat-saṅga*, do not have the proper effect, as described in *śāstra*. On the contrary, these people become hard-hearted. To exemplify this, it is said that people who come from outside, take bath in the holy places, become purified, and leave their sins here for the people who are residing here. So the residents become implicated in their sins.

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has mentioned five powerful things: Living in the *dhāma*, hearing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *sādhū-saṅga*, *nāma-kīrtana*, and *vigraha-sevā*. Even a little contact with these things can lead one to *bhāva*. But he says *sad-dhiyām bhāva-janmane*, that a person must be *saddhi* (offenseless), and especially not be offensive to the guru. It is only then that these five things will be effective. The *dhāma* is also included in these five things. Even a little contact with the *dhāma* can transport one to the *bhāva* platform; but for this, one must be qualified. These statements are not wrong, but one must be qualified to experience their power.

Residing in Vrindavan is effective only if one is free from envy, illicit sex, and violence to others. Although in *Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta* it is said that if one lives here, it does not matter what one does—the *dhāma* will have its effect. But later, the author also says that one has to avoid all these offenses, and only then will one see the effect.

There is also a *śloka* in *Upadeśāmṛta*:

*tiṣṭhan vraje tad-anurāgi janānugāmī  
kālam nayed akhilam ity upadeśa-sāram*

“In this way, one should reside in Vraja and serve Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of devotees. One should follow in the footsteps of Bhagavān’s beloved devotees, who are deeply attached to His devotional service.” (U 8)

The essence of all the instructions is that we should live in Vraja and follow in the footsteps of the *vraja-vāsīs*, but this does not mean the so-called “*vraja-vāsīs*.” Since this is the place of Kṛṣṇa, it is non-different from Him, but one has to be qualified to live here.



**QUESTION:** It is stated in *Bhakti Sandarbha* that after many lifetimes of accumulating *punya* (pious activities), one gets *sat-saṅga*. By what kind of *punya* does one gets *sat-saṅga*?

**ANSWER:** The word *punya* here refers to the nature to follow the orders of authority, and if he has practiced that many lifetimes, then he will meet a saintly person and naturally follow him, and this will be very effective.

**QUESTION:** Does this mean specifically a Vedic authority?

**ANSWER:** Yes, a śāstric authority. He performs his activities according to *śāstra*. As it is stated in *Gītā* 7.19:

*bahūnām janmanām ante  
jñānavān mām prapadyate  
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti  
sa mahātmā su-durlabhah*

“After many births, the truly learned surrenders to Me, knowing that Vāsudeva is everything. Such a great soul is extremely rare.”

So, when one comes to that level, one diligently follows the scriptures and performs one's prescribed duties, and then one develops *svabhāva* (the nature to follow and respect authority). After this, one gets *sādhū-saṅga*. *Sādhū* or *mahat* means guru. By the association of a guru, one will get *śraddhā*. One's previous practice will be an aid. Then one will listen and follow one's guru properly.

The human form of life itself is an opportunity to become a devotee. The human body is like a boat, the guru is like the helmsman, who guides the boat, and the Vedic scriptures are like the favorable winds. After acquiring such a position, if one does not cross over the material world, then he is considered as *ātmahā*, one who commits suicide. Therefore, one should follow the instructions. This is *punya*.

**QUESTION:** Regarding the prostitute Piṅgalā, how do we combine *sādhū-saṅga* with her spontaneous desire to serve Kṛṣṇa like Lakṣmī?

**ANSWER:** When these two things are combined, only then it can happen. Because she has had the association, it had an effect. If there had been no association, in her frustration, she would have thought of taking drugs or resorted to some other means. She lived in the city of Videha, the capital of Janaka who was famous for inviting *sādhū*s to his palace. Piṅgalā must have heard some discourses from these *sādhū*s.

**QUESTION:** So *sādhū saṅga* is considered compulsory, and we cannot do without it?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is compulsory. It is by the mercy of Bhagavān that one gets the association. Jīva Gosvāmī has explained that without the association of a saintly person, there is no possibility of taking to devotion. It does not happen by itself.

**QUESTION:** What is association, is it meditating, or serving, or ...?

**ANSWER:** Association is mainly with the mind, because this material world is based on your mental conceptions. The effect is brought about in the mind. You meet a devotee, see him, hear his words, do some physical service, or help in whatever way you can. All this is association.

**QUESTION:** Should a devotee's experiences and sentiments be discussed and shared with others on a similar platform, or just with the guru or somebody else on a higher platform?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it can be discussed with people of the same group.

**QUESTION:** *Bhakti* is not mechanical; it is based on loving consciousness. How to understand then that in the story of Prahāda Mahārāja, it is said that because he was a pure devotee 21 generations of his family were liberated?

**ANSWER:** Just as *bhakti* is transcendental, the devotee is also transcendental, because he has *bhakti*, and he works only for Bhagavān's pleasure. By the devotee's contact, those who are favorable to him or in contact with him, also get the benefit, if they are not offensive. By Bhagavān's grace, and, ultimately, by the grace of the devotee, they remember Him, like Him, and are favorable to Him. Then through his contact they can also become devotees, but they must be free from offense, especially *nāma-aparādha*.

## 98. Sambandha (Relationship), Abhidheya (Prescribed process), Prayojana (Goal)

**QUESTION:** In the very beginning of *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī recaps what is discussed in the former *Sandarbhās*. There the word *sambandhi* appears. What does *sambandhi* mean?

ANSWER: *Sambandhi* means, “one who has the *sambandha*, or relation.” Earlier, Jīva Gosvāmī has talked about *sambandha* and also about Kṛṣṇa with whom there is the *sambandha*. In the book, there is a relation between *vācya* (the word that is describing) and *vācaka* (that which is being described). So, this is also called the relation between the book and the object. *Sambandha* has to be with somebody who has the *sambandha*. Relationship means that which relates things. The words in the book are related to *tattva*. This is called *sambandha*, and *tattva* is called *sambandhi*.

QUESTION: Then, in *Bhakti Sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī begins a discussion of *abhidheya*, which we generally understand to mean the means of attaining Kṛṣṇa, or we understand it as *sādhana-bhakti*. How does the word *abhidheya* itself indicate that?

ANSWER: *Abhidheya* comes from the root *dhā*. *Abhidheya* means *vidheya* (to be done), just as *vidhi* means that which is described as the process. Or *abhidheya* means that which is spoken, which here also means that which is described as the process. As you have the word *abhidhā*, meaning “name,” or “word,” so *abhidheya* means “that which is to be described as the process”. *Abhidheya* is also the synonym for *vidheya*, which means the described process. Therefore, he analyzes the process that is described in the scriptures.

QUESTION: Jīva Gosvāmī also says that the *mukhya-tāt-parya* of the *śāstra* relates to *sambandha* and the *avāntara-tāt-parya* relates to *prayojana*. What does that mean?

ANSWER: First, you have to establish the proper object. Once that is established, then follows the question about the *prayojana*, or the purpose of it and the process to acquire or realize it. If you have not clearly established the object without removing the doubts, then these doubts about other things will also remain. *Abhidheya* and *prayojana* are dependent on *sambandha*. Therefore, that is the first item that has to be established. So, Jīva Gosvāmī has first worked to establish *sambandha*.

Earlier, Brahman was accepted as the Ultimate. So, Jīva Gosvāmī had to very clearly and profoundly establish that the *paratattva* is Kṛṣṇa, and Brahman is a feature of Kṛṣṇa. It is not anything different, independent, or superior.

Therefore, it says in *Gītā* 15.15: *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*, “I am to be known from all the Vedas.” If you know that, then the process of *abhidheya* and *prayojana* follows.

QUESTION: Does it mean that *abhidheya* and *prayojana* are inherent in *sambandha*?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: What is *siddhopadeśa*?

ANSWER: In *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā*, *dharma* is considered as *codanā lakṣano 'rtho dharmah* (that which has injunctions). Those statements, which do not contain injunctions (*vidhi*), are called *siddha*, or descriptive statements. There is no *vidhi* in *siddha vākya*. They call this *siddha-upadeśa*, descriptive statements without any *vidhi*, because *vidhi* will become part of *abhidheya*.

QUESTION: So do these descriptions fall into the category of *sambandha-jñāna*, this *siddhopadeśa*?

ANSWER: Yes.

## 99. Saṁskāras

QUESTION: How can we remove all *saṁskāras*? Is there any hope?

ANSWER: There is only one way to get rid of *saṁskāras*, and that is through devotion. When one takes *dīkṣā*, surrenders to the guru, and remains truthful, then one will become free from *saṁskāras*; otherwise there is no other process.

QUESTION: Jīva Gosvāmī also talks about *saṁskāras* in *Bhakti Sandarbha*. He mentions two types of people—one who first comes in contact with a devotee or knowledge related to God, and the other one who has *saṁskāras* from his previous birth. What are those *saṁskāras* or how does one acquire them, so that when they get the contact of a devotee, they turn towards the Lord?

ANSWER: *Saṁskāras* signify something that you have practiced a lot. Such practice gives rise to deep impressions. The more you perform a particular activity or remember something, the deeper are your *saṁskāras*. When you carry *saṁskāras* of a particular subject from your previous life, and you come in contact with an object related to that, then immediately you grasp that subject. This will happen regardless whether it is related to a material or spiritual subject.



In the material world, there are people who immediately grasp a particular topic, while others will not understand it or it will take a long time for them to understand. This happens because of their *saṁskāras* from a past life. If somebody is immediately interested in spiritual life, grasps, and follows it, that means he is carrying spiritual *saṁskāras* from his previous birth. He must have heard it, remembered it, and practiced it in a past life.

## 100. Sampradāyas, Other

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Vallabhācārya also got *dīkṣā* from Paṇḍita Gosvāmī? What is the philosophy of *puṣṭi-mārga*? Is he an eternal associate of Mahāprabhu and how to understand that he has founded his own *sampradāya*?

**ANSWER:** Vallabhācārya took *dīkṣā* from Paṇḍita Gosvāmī and was his associate. He was sincere, but at the time when he took *dīkṣā*, he had already written all of his books and was already established as an *ācārya*. After that, he did not write anything. Also, he did not live very long after his *dīkṣā*.

His son Viṭṭhalnātha was also a follower of Mahāprabhu and used to worship the deity of Mahāprabhu. This means Vallabhācārya also inspired his son to follow Mahāprabhu. It is a historical fact that Viṭṭhalnātha and all the Gosvāmīs, including Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, were very close to each other. The Gosvāmīs used to go and stay with Viṭṭhalnātha at Mathurā. There is the story that Viṭṭhalnātha sent a physician for Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. The Gosvāmīs would not have stayed with him if he did not belong to the same *parivāra* (family). They would not have eaten at his home in that case. The worship of Śrī Nāthajī Gopāla, which was Mādhavendra Purī's deity, was taken over by them. Originally, the disciples of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī worshiped this deity.

Generally, it happens that all these religions last for one generation. After that, deviations occur. The reason for this is that after some time, individualism creeps in. Then fanaticism comes. Śrī Harirāya, who was in the third generation from Vallabhācārya, organized it as a different *sampradāya*. He threw out the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas from Gopāla *mandir*, burned their places, and captured the temple. He was responsible for that, because then he could become the prominent *ācārya*. Otherwise, he would have had to remain a follower.

Now Nityānanda is very popular, and there is the Nityānanda *parivāra*. But who is Nityānanda? He is Balarāma, no doubt about that. But he did not belong to any *āśrama*. He was known as an *avadhūta*, or one who does not follow anything. Thus, He could not be an *ācārya* or a person who starts a *paramparā*. The very word *ācārya* signifies one who has a good conduct and teaches it to others. Mahāprabhu did not install Him on the post of *ācārya*. But now He has been propagated, and people have completely forgotten about Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, whom Mahāprabhu Himself had authorized. All the temples here in Vrindavan were maintained and managed by the followers of Paṇḍita Gosvāmī.

The same thing happened in Christianity. It was many years after Christ's passing away that they wrote the New Testament of the Holy Bible. Then various branches with different understanding grew out of that. So the real thing lasts only for short period, and then deviations come, because of people's personal motives.

**QUESTION:** So Vallabhācārya is an eternal associate of Bhagavān?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** What about that story in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* that Vallabhācārya had a discussion with Mahāprabhu that he is not accepting Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary. From this incident, I always had the impression that he was not following Mahāprabhu?

**ANSWER:** That is what I said, that he was already a *paṇḍita*, or scholar, before he took *dīkṣā*. To begin with, he was not a follower of Mahāprabhu. He was a great scholar. It does not mean that everybody has to follow Śrīdhara Svāmī, but when he met Mahāprabhu, Śrī Caitanya showed him that it is not proper to neglect Śrīdhara Svāmī. That is what impressed him, and he took *dīkṣā*. Śrī Vallabhācārya accepted Mahāprabhu as Kṛṣṇa. When he invited Mahāprabhu to his residence in Āḍāila village near Kāśī, he offered unoffered food with *tulasī* leaves to Mahāprabhu. This is described in their Vaiṣṇava Vārtā book. But later his followers did not accept that.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned yesterday that the Madhva and Rāmānujā *sampradāyas* mainly follow *varṇāśrama*, but what about Westerners taking initiation in these *sampradāyas*?

**ANSWER:** The followers of the Madhva and Rāmānujā *sampradāyas* belong to the *varṇāśrama-dharma*. They take *sannyāsa* according to the *varṇāśrama* principles. That is their condition. I do

not know any example that they have given *dikṣā* to a person not belonging to *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

## 101. Saralatā (Simplicity)

QUESTION: What is the meaning of simplicity, *saratatā*?

ANSWER: Simplicity means freedom from any deceptive propensity. The root of a deceptive propensity is selfishness, and it has its sidekicks like crookedness, hard-heartedness, and dryness. Crookedness means to say one thing, do another, and think in a third way. Hard-heartedness means being of a cruel nature, not soft or compassionate, apathetic, not appreciative of others' good qualities. Simplicity, however, means the opposite of this. Accepting the guru as Kṛṣṇa, or God, is the first way we practice simplicity. If we are simple with him, then similarly, we will be simple with Kṛṣṇa.

The example of simplicity in the material world is a mother and her baby. The mother is very affectionate, soft-hearted, compassionate, and appreciative. She sees all the good things in the baby. This is the example in this material world, although it is not a perfect example, because when the child grows up, this mood is lost. Later, the mother may behave crookedly toward the son, and the son may also behave in the same manner. He may not appreciate the behavior of his mother any more.

*Saratatā* means a similar favorable behavior to be manifested towards the guru.

## 102. Śāstra

QUESTION: What is the characteristic of a scripture to be counted as *śāstra*? And which scriptures are called *śāstra*?

ANSWER: *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Brahmā-sūtra* (or *Vedānta-sūtra*) and *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma* are considered as *śāstra*, as well as other books related to devotion, such as those written by the Gosvāmīs. The *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, and *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma* are accepted by all *sampradāyas* as authoritative *śāstra*. Then every *sampradāya* has some specific books, which they accept as *śāstra*. For us, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and the books of the Gosvāmīs are most authoritative.

**QUESTION:** Before one performs *uttama-bhakti*, he may have different experiences thinking them to be pure, although that may be wrong. How does one know when one is performing *uttama-bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** When you want to know something, then there has to be a proper means of knowing it. For *bhakti*, that proper means of knowledge is *śāstra*, because no one else can explain it. *Śāstra* defines *uttama-bhakti* and other types of *bhakti*. *Śāstra* has to be studied from a genuine guru, i.e., one who has studied it, realized it, and is practicing it. Only such a guru can explain it. Otherwise, by your self-study you will not be able to understand it. People in this material world do not even have the knowledge that there is a soul in the body. You may just hear about it, and if you do not hear about it, you may never know that there is a soul in the body. Sex is the main or ultimate experience that anybody wants, and this is because people are born of sex. Therefore, this is their biggest drive. Even when they take to some spiritual process, that drive remains there unless they properly understand *śāstra*.

Just as in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Uddhava poses a question to Kṛṣṇa: "What is *bhakti*? Please explain this to me." Then Kṛṣṇa explains it. In the same way, if we want to go to Kṛṣṇa, who is our *iṣṭa-devatā* or worshipable God, then we have to hear from Him about *bhakti*, and we have to learn how to execute it. We should not hear from anybody else. If somebody wants to worship someone else, then he has to hear from that person.

Otherwise, generally, people ask, "What do you say on this subject matter, what is your opinion?" But these individual opinions or statements are not conclusive, nor can they give the real understanding. Even if one has a genuine guru, one has to know what *śāstra* says. *Śāstra* and Bhagavān are one, because Bhagavān Himself manifests in the form of *śāstra*. Therefore, one can know about *bhakti* only from *śāstra*.

Otherwise, one will remain in the dark and think, "I am practicing *uttama-bhakti*." Then after a while, he will again think, "Now I am practicing *uttama-bhakti*," and it will go on like that. Earlier, we discussed about *laukika-śraddhā*, or material faith, and how people practice something on the basis of material faith. Then they experience something that is mixed with their own material impressions and material desires. They will even consider that their experience is the supreme, but the test is only *śāstra*, and that also has to be understood from the guru. Only *sadācāra*, or the behavior of a saintly devotee who follows *śāstra*, is the *pramāṇa*, or the authoritative way of knowing something. This is explained in the



*Bhāgavatam* when Uddhava posed questions to Kṛṣṇa directly. In the same way one has to understand it.

**QUESTION:** The Gosvāmīs wrote different books for different gradations of people, and some are for devotees. Once you said that *Upadeśāmṛta* is not really for devotees. Are the books we are studying now, like *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and the *Sandarbhās*, for devotees or for non-devotees?

**ANSWER:** The Gosvāmīs composed many books and their main purpose was to fulfill the desire of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who had instructed them to give a philosophy based on *śāstra*. Before that, there were other Indian philosophies, but they are not flawless. Therefore, on the instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Gosvāmīs compiled the most wonderful and supremely flawless philosophy. These books are written for devotees and not for non-devotees. For non-devotees there are other philosophies, like the *śaḍ-darśanas*, the six systems of philosophies, or even atheistic philosophies, which are prevalent. These books that the Gosvāmīs have written, explain that one has to perform devotional service, the essence of which is performing favorable acts and avoiding unfavorable acts without any ulterior motives. This is the purpose behind their literature, which is all written for devotees.

When I said, "It is not for the devotees," it means that it is not for the *rāgānugā* devotees. Those who have a natural liking for *bhakti* do not need such instructions. These are for *ajāta ruci bhaktas*, those who have not attained *ruci*.

**QUESTION:** I have read in *Yoga of Dejection* that *śāstra* teaches through *dhvani*, or secondary meaning. Does it mean that the secondary, or indirect, meaning of *śāstra* (*dhvani*) is always more important than the literal, or primary, meaning?

**ANSWER:** *Śāstra* predominantly teaches by *dhvanyārtha* (implied meaning). Especially that *śāstra* that is *kāvya*, or poetry, is considered to be the best one, because it conveys the meaning by *dhvani*. The primary meaning is not considered to be important.

**QUESTION:** That is why we need the commentary of the *ācāryas* to give the implied meaning?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** One can get so many meanings by breaking the words in different places. Does the writer intend to convey all these meanings?

**ANSWER:** This meaning by *dhvanyartha* is dependent on the words, and there are set rules how the meaning is conveyed. It is not that you can whimsically take out anything. Those who write are not ignorant people. Therefore, meanings are derived according to the rules. For example, when you ring a bell, the first sound is like the primary meaning and then a lot of reverberations follow. These are the implied meanings, called *dhvanyarthas*.

**QUESTION:** Regarding mother Yaśodā trying to bind Kṛṣṇa, it is said that Kṛṣṇa makes the impossible possible. Yesterday you said that the stories like Govardhana *līlā* are not to be understood in their literal meaning, but rather one should understand the purpose behind them. Yet, if Kṛṣṇa can make the impossible possible, then he can also lift Govardhana. How does one understand these seemingly contradictory points?

**ANSWER:** What *śāstra* says has to be understood by the six points that were explained yesterday. It is not that I read and heard one thing, and now I want to apply that everywhere.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains that there is another point coming out from the same pastime. Just because it is poetic, it does not mean that you have to apply only this one understanding. Kṛṣṇa performs His pastimes, but He also wants to convey certain meanings. This is also one of His characteristics.

*Śāstra* has to be studied, otherwise, you may say, "OK, he can make the impossible possible," and then apply this principle to explain everything. If you are satisfied with that, there is no problem, but there are other things that are also being conveyed, and these must be understood.

*Śāstra* is written in words, therefore, first you have to understand the word. That means you have to know grammar, you need knowledge of *chanda* (meter), *kośa* (dictionary), *alaṅkāra* (poetic embellishments), *rasa* (theory of mellows), and so on. Then you have to study *śakti-vāda* (word meaning), which is a very big subject, with *vyutpatti-vāda* (derivation). These topics, *śakti-vāda* and *vyutpatti-vāda*, are philosophies in themselves, and when you learn them, you will understand how the meaning is given.

First of all, at least grammar has to be studied properly. Grammar is very basic knowledge about the word. It just tells about the syntactical construction of the sentence, how to put the verb, subject, object, and the various cases in the correct order. But how these words have been used by the knower of language is a different topic.

There are three meanings to a word: *abhidā-vṛtti*, *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*, and *vyañjanā-vṛtti*.

*Abhidā-vṛtti* is the primary meaning. According to *śakti-vāda*, it is God who created the word and therefore it has some potency (*śakti*) in it, and because of that potency, it can make you understand a particular object. So when we use a word, say *śāstra*, then this word *śāstra* signifies an object to which it points. From where does the potency in this word come? The answer is that *Īśvara* gives it. This is called *īśvara-saṅketa* (God willed): "Let this particular word denote this particular meaning."

There are many words that are not found in *śāstra*. We also make up words. In those words, we give the *śakti*, because we decide that a certain word will denote a certain object. There are various ways of knowing the *śakti* of a word, including the dictionary, usage, the context, and from those who know the meaning. But *abhidā-vṛtti*, or primary meaning, is very limited. It is almost fixed that this word conveys this meaning. After giving the primary meaning, the *śakti* cannot give more meanings.

1. The second meaning is called *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* (secondary meaning). When the primary meaning does not make sense and yet a learned person uses the statement, then one is forced to take the secondary meaning. Here the assumption is: Because an authority makes the statement, it cannot be wrong. If the primary meaning does not make sense, then you have to drop the primary meaning and take the secondary meaning.

2. Why does a learned person make such a statement? Why did he not make a statement that would give a proper primary meaning? The answer is that he has something in his mind that he wants to imply by such a usage. That is called *vyañjanā-vṛtti* (implied meaning).

There is a very common phrase in Sanskrit, *gaṅgāyām ghoṣa*. *Gaṅgāyām* means "in the river Gaṅgā," and *ghoṣa* means "a hamlet." The literal meaning is "a hamlet in the river Gaṅgā." It is not possible that a hamlet can stay in the flowing river, because the water will sweep it away. So you have to reject the primary meaning and instead take the secondary meaning. Instead of Gaṅgā referring to its primary meaning—that a river that was brought down by the austerities of King Bhagīratha—the secondary meaning has to be taken: "the bank of the river Gaṅgā." Now, the word "Gaṅgā" instead of meaning "the river Gaṅgā" will mean "bank of Gaṅgā." Why is such a usage given? To imply that if this hamlet is on the

bank of Gaṅgā, there will be cool air, it will be a clean place, and people living there will be pious, because they are living on the bank of the pious river Gaṅgā. All these meanings he wants to convey in just one sentence. Instead of using so many words, he uses the implied meaning. Sometimes, the reason for conveying the meaning in an implied manner is to hide it from a certain class of people.

The meaning in the *dāmodara-līlā* is not just that there are ropes, and they cannot bind Kṛṣṇa. You also have to see what is being stated there. It is not that Jīva Gosvāmī is giving this meaning out of his fancy. You have to study the whole context. You cannot take what was said yesterday and then apply it everywhere. You have to see the context, what is happening, and what the author is trying to portray. All these things have to be considered.

**QUESTION:** How is it possible to give up old thinking patterns or concepts, because so much that I know has come from what I have heard previously from other philosophies?

**ANSWER:** Just give them up. *Śāstra* is authoritative and gives transcendental knowledge. Therefore, the opinion of *śāstra* has to be known. Conclusion or philosophical understanding has to be acquired from *śāstra*. Anything contrary to that has to be rejected. Otherwise, people will speak so many things.

All spiritual paths accept *śāstra* as their authority and not the statements of individuals. *Śāstra* is the supreme authority. We have to refer only to that; there is no other way.

## 103. Sāttvika Bhāvas (Ecstatic Symptoms)

**QUESTION:** How are we to understand the *sāttvika bhāvas* (ecstatic symptoms) of Mahāprabhu, which He exhibited in Purī, such as His joints becoming loose and long, foam coming out of His mouth, and blood oozing out of the pores?

**ANSWER:** This is the transformation of the heart because of the feelings of *mamatva*, love. When there is intense affection for the object of love, the mind becomes completely absorbed in Him. When there is a feeling of separation, then the body manifests such symptoms from *sattva* (the heart captivated by *kṛṣṇa rati*).

The body reacts to the mental state. When the mind is hankering to meet the lover, then the body also manifests certain symptoms. Just as when your mind is in a particular state of emotion, such as



anger, then certain symptoms also manifest in the body. In the same way, if there is intense loving feeling, then the body also manifests certain symptoms.

**QUESTION:** So this is because of separation from Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** Yes, obviously. If a person is angry, then some symptoms manifest in his body. Or if you feel separation from some person, then there are certain symptoms that manifest in the body, such as, tears in your eyes, or your hairs may stand on end. When somebody dies whom you love, then you may cry because of feeling separation. Similar symptoms can also manifest when somebody is feeling separation from Bhagavān.

**QUESTION:** If one reads these descriptions of the *sāttvika-bhāvas* (ecstatic symptoms), it is quite difficult to relate to it, to see them as ecstatic symptoms, because for me, that must be something joyous; whereas these descriptions sound very heavy or frightening.

**ANSWER:** This does not happen in the material body, so do not fear. In this material body it is difficult even to realize their meaning. It is rare even to get *śraddhā*, so then what to speak of all these symptoms. These symptoms are just explained according to *śāstra* as to how *bhāva* manifests in higher stages. These are not experienced in the material body.

A devotee is not interested in manifesting any such symptoms. He wants to do service. Actually, what he wants is the feeling of *mamatva*, because when *mamatva* is there, then everything else follows. Therefore, the devotee's interest is to attain *mamatva*, or the feeling of *prīti*. He is not interested in crying or any symptoms of ecstasy.

This description is a way of explaining how *rasa* in *bhakti* becomes manifest. It is *sahityika*, or a literary style of depicting it.

## 104. Seeing Kṛṣṇa

**QUESTION:** How to understand that through chanting the Holy Name, Kṛṣṇa will reveal His form?

**ANSWER:** When Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself through the chanting of the Holy Name, one will see Him in front of oneself, as if one is watching TV or a film in a cinema.

**QUESTION:** In the Eleventh Canto (SB 11.2.45), it is described how an *uttamā-bhakta* has *bhagavad-bhāva* and sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere. Should we practice this as *sāadhanā* or just do our service?

*sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed  
bhagavad-bhāvam ātmanah  
bhūtāni bhagavaty ātmany  
eṣa bhāgavatottamaḥ*

“He is the topmost of Bhagavān’s devotees who sees that His Lord is in all living beings and sees that all beings are situated in Bhagavān.”

**ANSWER:** In *bhakti*, it happens automatically (*bhakti* *śruta-grhītayā*, SB 1.2.12), and by devotion and hearing, one sees Bhagavān. When *bhakti* is there, then Bhagavān is there, because He is non-different from *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** If we do not have that vision, because we are not surrendered enough, still we should not mix *bhakti* with the path of *jñāna* and try to see artificially?

**ANSWER:** Yes, you should not mix *bhakti* with *jñāna*. These are two separate paths. The one Absolute Reality is seen in three different ways: Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān.

*Bhakti* means *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*, or doing favorable service to Kṛṣṇa. When you have that *śraddhā*, then you do service, and when you are doing service to Kṛṣṇa, you will see Kṛṣṇa. You may not physically see Him in His form, but His remembrance will be there. You will not see Kṛṣṇa as a person, standing in front of you all the time, but the *bhāva* is there. That is the meaning of *bhakti*. If you are doing service, you are conscious of Kṛṣṇa. Followers of other paths have to practice it, but here it is natural. Whatever you are doing, you remember Him. For example, when you are cooking, you are cooking for Kṛṣṇa.

**QUESTION:** How are we to understand this vision of *bhagavaty ātmany* (to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere)?

**ANSWER:** There are so many explanations of that. It is not necessary that you have to see Kṛṣṇa personally all the time.

**QUESTION:** So how then is He seen, if we are not seeing this *svayam rūpa*?

ANSWER: With the *bhāva*, or being conscious of Him.

QUESTION: Do you see the things related to Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: Yes, because seeing Kṛṣṇa all the time would be very impractical.

[See also: Realizations]

## 105. Service (Bhajana-kriyā)

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain more about the stage of *bhajana-kriyā*?

ANSWER: *Bhajana-kriyā*: *Kriyā* means activity, and *bhajana* means service. The word *bhajana* comes from the Sanskrit root *bhaj*, which means to serve. So *bhajana-kriyā* is the same as *bhakti*, or service, and this service has to be done sincerely, without any motive.

Generally, people do service with some intentions. Service should be pleasing to the guru. *Amāyayā anuvṛtti*, *anuvṛtti* means service and *amāyayā* means without any *māyā* or any motives within the mind. Then only there is the possibility of removing the *anarthas*.

Otherwise, if the disciple does not like what the guru is doing, there is no question of *anartha-nivṛtti*. Such a disciple will work from his own ignorance—*avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa* (ignorance, ego, attachments, disliking, and fear of death). The disciple will even think that he knows better than the guru, and find fault with him. If, however, the disciple likes what the guru is doing, if he appreciates it, then naturally there is *anartha-nivṛtti*.

*Anartha* is nothing other than *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and *abhiniveśa*, and these are all material. You have to like what the guru is doing. He has no material goal in life. *Anartha-nivṛtti* will happen by serving in this manner. It is a practical thing that has to be experienced.

Otherwise, people have said so many things about *bhajana-kriyā* that have nothing to do with *bhakti*. In the name of *bhakti*, it only makes a person *bahirmukha*, materialistic. People even say, "Do not associate too much with the guru." If you do not associate with the guru, or if you do not even like to see him, then where is the *anartha-nivṛtti*?

Sometimes, people do service for the purpose of controlling the guru. They serve, as if the guru is at their mercy. That is not the way to do *bhajana-kriyā*.

QUESTION: Does *bhajana-kriyā* mean direct service to the guru?

ANSWER: Yes, service to the guru is *bhajana-kriyā*. It is direct when done in a loving mood.

QUESTION: Each of us has our nature, so should we try to serve the guru according to our own nature, or should we just try to do what the guru wants us to do? How much of our propensities should we use?

ANSWER: You have to serve according to the order of the guru.

QUESTION: If I am doing *go-sevā* here in Vṛndāvan, then it is easy for me to understand that it is *sevā*, but in the West it is difficult for me to see whatever I am doing as *sevā*.

ANSWER: When one takes *dīkṣā* and surrenders, then the disciple is not independent anymore. His mind, body, and speech—everything is surrendered. Whatever he does after that is done only as a service. He does not do anything for himself, because he is not independent. He is related to Bhagavān. Therefore, whatever he performs with his body, mind, and speech is all related, because he has taken a vow to act congenially for Bhagavān and not to perform anything that is unfavorable. If he remembers this fact that he belongs to Bhagavān and that he is Bhagavān's servant, then whatever action he performs, is service.

*sva-dharma-stho yajan yajñair  
anāśih-kāma uddhava  
na yāti svarga-narakau  
yady anyan na samācaret*

*asmīl loke vartamānaḥ  
sva-dharma-stho 'naghaḥ śuciḥ  
jñānaṁ viśuddham āpnoti  
mad-bhaktim vā yadṛcchayā*

"If one performs one's prescribed duties and worships through sacrificial performances, but never hankers for their fruits, O Uddhava, one neither ascends to heaven, nor goes down to hell unless one performs a forbidden act. Continuing in this body and



adhering to one's prescribed duties, not incurring sin and remaining pure, by My grace one attains pure wisdom or devotion to Me."  
(SB 11.20.10,11)

Remaining in this world and performing activities with this consciousness, a person attains perfection or the ultimate form of devotion.

[SND: The problem is that at present people have no concept of surrender. They do not know what this word means. They have been trained to remain independent from their very childhood. That is why this type of question is asked repeatedly, and Maharaja repeatedly speaks of surrender.]

**QUESTION:** When one is doing *sevā*, the consciousness is different than when you are aloof and observing and reflecting. How do these different types of perception manifest when one progresses?

**ANSWER:** Consciousness is one. When you are working, your consciousness is that you are serving Bhagavān and performing favorable action. So, you have to have that mood. Whether you are engaged in service or not, it makes no difference to the consciousness. Sometimes your service is done with your physical body and sometimes with the mind, but the mind is actually involved in both. In both cases, the temperament, or *bhāva*, is of doing favorable *sevā*.

The important thing to remember is, "I am Bhagavān's servant." You should be conscious of this at all time. Otherwise, if you do not have this consciousness, then whatever you do, will be motivated by your material ego as a worship of your own self. That is not service.

The difference between service and work is only a difference of consciousness. Service is done for the pleasure of Bhagavān, and work is done for the pleasure of the self with some motive to gain something. If you have that independent intention, then you commit mistakes and offenses, and disregard the order of the guru, thinking him to be a material person and not a man of knowledge.

In *uttama-bhakti*, the mind, body, speech, and activities are all for the sake of Bhagavān. One should be introspective and know one's mind and motives.

For example, when you touch unoffered food to *prasāda*, it will also become *prasāda*. In this way, people think that they are not eating unoffered food, but that is just tricking Bhagavān.

Problems arise because people do not have regard for the guru. They think he is an ordinary person. This is the basis of all problems. Before one takes *dikṣā*, one should consider whether one wants to accept the guru as one's supreme authority or not. *Dikṣā* means surrender, and once you surrender, you should follow. Otherwise, you are creating more problems for yourself. It is better not to take *dikṣā*, because once you have taken *dikṣā*, then you should be truthful to your vow of surrender.

*Bhakti* is surrender. The consciousness of surrender is the undercurrent of *bhakti*. This should be remembered and never forgotten under any circumstances.

Kṛṣṇa told Uddhava:

*dharmo mad-bhakti-kṛt prokto  
jñānam caikātmya-darśanam  
guṇesv asaṅgo vairāgyam  
aiśvaryaṁ cānimādayaḥ*

"That which results in devotion to Me is called *dharma*. To see the oneness of Brahman everywhere is called *jñāna*. Renunciation is distaste for sense objects, and the eight types of yogic powers, beginning with *aṇimā* (becoming small) are called as *aiśvarya*, or regulating powers." (SB 11.19.27)

Work that is done for Him is *dharma*. Whatever activity you perform, whether during the day or night, is service, because you are surrendered. And this is the consciousness you should maintain. Many times people ask the question, "What about this thing or that thing I am doing?" It does not matter what you are doing if you are surrendered. This is the consciousness that one must maintain.

**QUESTION:** Service is to please guru and Kṛṣṇa without motivation. When I am performing service, there is the desire to please Kṛṣṇa, but there are other motivations, too. Is this service or something else?

**ANSWER:** The very definition of service is that you are endeavoring only for the pleasure of the person whom you are serving and not for your own pleasure.

There is a difference between service and work. Work means that you perform certain activities for a motive and not to please the person for whom you are working. If the motive is anything other than pleasing the person, then it is not service. The word "service" in such circumstance is used in the secondary sense.

Just as people call somebody *prabhu*. *Prabhu* actually means God or master, but there is only one God, and that is Kṛṣṇa. So, this word is not used in its primary sense, but in the secondary. In the same way, sometimes you may say, "He is doing service," but if the motive is not to please guru and Kṛṣṇa, then it is not service, although you may use the word.

**QUESTION:** Is there something like mixed service—a mixture of motives and the desire to please?

**ANSWER:** If the desire is to please Bhagavān, then only this is service, but if there is anything else, that is not service.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean that what you are doing is one or the other, but not mixed?

**ANSWER:** You can call it mixed. Just as when you mix water with milk. It is not that the water becomes milk or the milk becomes water. Water is water and milk is milk. Now, you can call the whole thing milk, as people are doing, but it is not milk, even though it looks like milk.

In the material world, when people work in some office or company, they serve according to the directions given by the boss or supervisor. They do not act independently, thinking, "This is good, so I will do it." But when people come to the spiritual path, they think they should work according to their own intelligence or for their own satisfaction, and not for the satisfaction of the guru. This is not called service. If you act like this in the material world in some office, then you will be fired. In spiritual life you still hang around. In fact, you may even be praised.

**QUESTION:** Is it the consciousness, which makes some service devotional?

**ANSWER:** Yes, otherwise it is just work.

**QUESTION:** If somebody is away from the guru and is doing sincere service, does the guru know about this? Is there some spiritual connection?

**ANSWER:** If one is performing service sincerely, without any *kapaṭa*, or ulterior motive, then the guru knows. It is very difficult to understand what it means, to perform service sincerely, but you can understand it if there is the feeling of *mamatva*. *Mamatva* cannot really be translated exactly, but it means "my-ness"—that somebody

belongs to me. It is like the feeling that a parent, especially the mother, has for the baby. There is a feeling that the baby belongs to her. There is a relationship from the heart. When such a feeling is there, then there is no other motive involved in it. *Mamatva* is without any motive except to please the object of affection. This is what it means to be selfless. In the material world, there is always some selfishness, but at least this example of the mother's *mamatva* for the baby gives some understanding as to what service means.

In spiritual life, *mamatva* is completely selfless. If one has this relationship of *mamatva*, then it does not matter where one is doing the service. Īśvara accepts it because Īśvara is all-pervading and not limited.

Similarly, when you serve the cows, if your service is full of love and affection toward the cow, this brings her happiness and she will reciprocate. You may wonder how cows can understand your feelings, but they do. Similarly, if one performs service to the guru, there will be reciprocation.

**QUESTION:** How does one serve the guru apart from cow *sevā*?

**ANSWER:** You serve according to your liking, capability, and qualification.

**QUESTION:** Does this mean just taking on the consciousness that one is doing this for the guru, rather than any particular type of service?

**ANSWER:** Consciousness of course has to be there, but also service must be done. Service has to be done directly to the guru.

**QUESTION:** Service is done according to one's liking, but on the other hand, love means to please the other person according to his or her liking. Is it like a child who offers something to the parents and the parents accept it, because they know it is given out of love, although it may be something which the parents do not like?

**ANSWER:** It is done with fondness. When you like somebody, you also understand what he likes, and that becomes your liking. The example of the child is not proper as the child has no ability to understand the mood and liking of the parent, but the disciple is supposed to know the guru's heart.

**QUESTION:** In the beginning I do not know the person or what they like, so what can I do?



ANSWER: When you do not know, you try to know. You have to know. This is your duty.

QUESTION: Some people are more active in life, whereas, others are more passive. Do the more passive people have more problems in *bhakti*?

ANSWER: He will also become active. This inaction or passivity is because of ignorance, but when one becomes a devotee, he cannot remain inactive. Action comes from attachment. So when he has attachment to *bhakti* or Kṛṣṇa, then he will also be active. He will not remain inactive.

QUESTION: It is because the taste is there?

ANSWER: Yes. You will not be lazy. Such defects will leave you.

QUESTION: What does it mean to do service with full heart?

ANSWER: It means that first you have to belong to Bhagavān, become His person, and then do service. It means that you should not think of yourself as independent or separate from Him. At present, our mentality is that we are separate from Bhagavān. Bhagavān is different, and we are different. Whatever we do, even if we pray or do some devotional activity, we keep ourselves separate from Him, but that is not devotion.

For example, there is a *pūjārī* in the temple, who is doing *pūjā*, but he has his own house and family. He is actually more concerned about maintaining them than serving the deity in the temple. Therefore, he does not mind stealing money from the donation box or stealing the paraphernalia of Bhagavān, because his real interest is not with Bhagavān. It is with his own family. This is not surrender. That is not doing service with a full heart.

Therefore, this path of *bhakti* is completely free from deception, *anābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*. When you keep yourself separate, then you will have your separate desires, and then your service will be just a means to fulfill your desires. It is like a person who is doing a job and getting a salary. The interest of the servant is not for the master, even though the master has hired him and purchased his time. The servant's real interest is elsewhere. He takes the salary which he will use for his own pleasure and interests.

*satyaṁ diśaty arthitam arthito nṛṇāṁ  
narvārthado yat punar arthitā yataḥ  
svayaṁ vidhatte bhajatām anicchatām  
icchāpidhānaṁ nija-pāda-pallavam*

“It is true that Bhagavān grants the desires of people when requested by them, but this is not the supreme gift because even after getting their desires fulfilled, they beg for more. Even though not asked for, to those who worship Him, Bhagavān gives them His own lotus feet, which cease all desires.” (SB 5.19.27)

Even if somebody is *sakāma* and performs *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa blesses him by putting His feet on the very spot from where the desires generate. This is to be understood allegorically. The allegoric explanation is that when the desires are coming out from that source, they catch the fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's feet. In this way, the desires do not remain independent but become related to Kṛṣṇa. They take on the fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's feet. It means that they become combined with service to Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, Kṛṣṇa thinks, “If I give him something now, he will ask for something else and trouble Me in future.” To prevent this, He closes the very source with His foot so that no more desires will come. Then, if there are any desires left, they are related to service. If not, the person will keep himself independent. Therefore, *sakāma bhakti* is not considered really as *bhakti*, because it is for the independent purpose of the person. Service with a full heart means you do not consider yourself as separate.

Therefore, *bhakti* does not have any covering of *jñāna* or *karma*. The covering of *jñāna* and *karma* means a desire to enjoy, relax, be liberated, and keep your own independence.

**QUESTION:** Where does the inspiration to act for God come from?

**ANSWER:** It comes from God. If it is not coming from God, then you will have some personal motive behind it.

**QUESTION:** Maybe you do it because you like it?

**ANSWER:** The liking to serve God is not material. Why is it that only you have suddenly started liking it and not others?

You perform service in two ways: One is *saguna*, in the *guṇas*, and the other one is *nirguṇa*, beyond the *guṇas*. If the inspiration is pure, without any motive, then this is not a result of our own actions, because *nirguṇa* is not a result of anything that is in the

*guṇas*. *Nirguṇa* cannot come from anything that is material or in the *guṇas*. Transcendental matters are not a result of anything material.

If you understand that the inspiration to do service in God consciousness is not material and it cannot come from material actions or material thinking, it must be coming from God, because there is no other source for it.

QUESTION: Could Mahārāja explain the verse SB 1.2.18:

*naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu  
nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā  
bhagavaty uttama-śloke  
bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*

“When all material desires are almost destroyed, then by regular service to the devotees, unswerving *bhakti* unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who possesses pure fame, manifests.”

Could you especially explain the line “through *sevā* and through hearing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed?”<sup>8</sup> What does “almost completely” mean?

ANSWER: These *Bhāgavatam* verses are explaining the steps in devotion, which is, basically, what you see in BRS 1.4.15-16:

*ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā  
tato 'nārtha-nivṛtṭiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā ruciḥ tataḥ  
athāśaktiḥ tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudāñcati  
sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramāḥ*

[This verse describes the steps on the path of *bhakti* from beginning stage to perfection.] “First, one gets faith [by the association of a devotee]. Then, based on that faith, one further seeks association with devotees to know more about *bhakti*, and then one practices *bhakti*. The *anarthas* are then destroyed. This results in steady *bhakti* without confusion. As one continues to practice *bhakti* one gets a liking (*ruci*) for it. This results in deep attachment (*āśakti*) to *bhakti*. This further matures into *bhāva* and then *prema*. This is the progression for manifesting *prema* for those performing *sādhana-bhakti*.”

This particular *Bhāgavatam* verse is talking about *bhajana-kriyā*, *nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā* (by regularly serving the pure devotee and the *Bhāgavatam*), then there is *anārtha-nivṛtṭi*, and then you

<sup>8</sup> This refers to the BBT-translation of this verse.

get *niṣṭhā*, because it says *bhakti bhavati naiṣṭhikī*. It is basically explaining that after *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā* comes. *Bhakti* becomes manifest even if some traces of *anartha* are still remaining.

It is not necessary, like in other processes, that *anarthas* have to be removed completely for *bhakti* to manifest. So this whole chapter is, basically, talking about advancement in *bhakti*, beginning from *śraddhā*. It was explained earlier, how *kathā-ruci* comes via *mahat-sevayā*, then from there, one takes to *bhāgavata-sevayā* (service to devotees), then *niṣṭhā*, and then *rajas*, *tamas* are removed and one develops interest.

QUESTION: Does *bhakti* come at the level of *niṣṭhā*?

ANSWER: Yes, because you become fixed and the *anarthas* have been removed.

QUESTION: What does *abhadreṣu* mean?

ANSWER: *Anartha*.

QUESTION: Sometimes, when I am doing *go-sevā*, I am in a dilemma. Should I go to the class on time or finish my service? Although the important parts of *go-sevā* are done, there are still some things left, which I know Mahārāja would like done.

ANSWER: You have to adjust your time in such a way that the service does not suffer, because the ultimate purpose is service. *Bhakti* means service, and that is what we are trying to achieve. So it has to be done in such a way that you complete the service. There should be no disturbance to that.

QUESTION: What is the difference between *prasāṅga* and *paricaryā* in terms of *mahat-saṅga*?

ANSWER: First one has *śraddhā*, and then one associates with a devotee, which basically means the guru. *Prasāṅga*, or association, means hearing *sāstra* and removing doubts. Then one also does physical service, and that is *paricaryā*. Both are required. The difference is that in *prasāṅga* there is no direct service, and in *paricaryā* there is service.

QUESTION: Generally, after hearing, one becomes inspired and renders service as well?

ANSWER: Yes.



## 106. Sexual Desires

QUESTION: How can we control sexual desires?

ANSWER: Accept a guru and follow him. Lust is only a state of mind. When one considers oneself as independent, then one has the mood to enjoy, but if one fully surrenders to the guru, then there is no more desire to enjoy.

[See also: Love, Lust, Material desires, Suffering]

## 107. Siddha-praṇālī, Siddha-deha

QUESTION: What is the qualification for *siddha-praṇālī mantra*?

ANSWER: You have to have *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*, follow the guru, serve him, and be free from any material attachment, especially lust. You have to be completely dedicated to the guru. If the guru is satisfied and Kṛṣṇa inspires him to give the *mantra*, then he will give you *siddha-praṇālī*. But you have to serve Kṛṣṇa without any propensity to cheat. Otherwise, trying to get *siddha-praṇālī* without being qualified is like trying to travel to the spiritual world with a false passport. Kṛṣṇa will not let you in.

In the first Canto of the *Bhāgavatam*, Nārada Muni explains how in his previous life he got his *siddha deha* (SB 1.6.28). Nārada's qualifications are mentioned in SB 1.6.27. He was fully absorbed in thinking of Kṛṣṇa, had no attachments, and was free from all material taints. In SB 1.6.26 it states that he was fully satisfied, completely free from all material desires, humble, and non-envious.

(SB 1.6.27): "O *brāhmaṇa*, death came in due course of time like a flash of lightning to me, whose mind was fixed on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was free from attachment, and whose heart was pure."

(SB 1.6.28): "When the pure transcendental body was awarded to me, the material body made of the five elements fell off, because its *prārabdha karma* came to an end."

QUESTION: When do we develop spiritual senses?

ANSWER: *Sevā* is done with the *sādhaka* body. A perfected devotee attains a *siddha-deha*, or a spiritual body after his death. *Siddha-deha* can be attained only through *guru-sevā*, executed in this *sādhaka* body. You can only meditate about your spiritual body

and attain the *bhāva* and then *siddha-deha* is awarded after this body is given up. *Yam yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ* (Gītā 8.6) is the general principle.

**QUESTION:** Is it that at one point, both the material body and the spiritual body are present and active?

**ANSWER:** When Bhagavān wants to give somebody a transcendental body by His will, then this body falls off, and one gets his spiritual form (*siddha-deha*).

If one follows the process of devotion, beginning with *śraddhā*, accepting a guru, *bhajana-kriyā*, etc., then one becomes qualified to receive *bhāva*. When he is finally given the spiritual body, then this material body drops, because its purpose is over.

**QUESTION:** So when it is said in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* in regard to serving in *sādhaka-rūpa* and *siddha-rūpa*, what exactly is this *siddha-rūpa* referring to?

**ANSWER:** It is service done with the mentally conceived form. It is service through the mind.

**QUESTION:** When the living entity becomes fully realized, by the grace of the Lord, then the material body drops and the *svarūpa*, or the spiritual body, is given. How can we understand this? What is the spiritual body?

**ANSWER:** This body is running on the *prārabdha karma*. *Prārabdha karma* is that *karma* that is taken out for one particular life from the complete store of *karma*. If one becomes a devotee, his *karma* is finished completely, whether *prārabdha* or *aprārabdha*. Then the living entity is under the control of *Īśvara*, and *Īśvara* keeps the body of a devotee by His will. When *Īśvara* wants to give a spiritual body, then this material body is disconnected from the *ātmā*. The living entity becomes self-realized and gets a spiritual body, which is conscious and which is his own *svarūpa*. The devotee no longer has any connection with his material body at that time. This is called death, liberation, attaining perfection, or receiving a spiritual body.

**QUESTION:** Is it possible that this can occur when the person is alive, in the material body?

**ANSWER:** No. This material body drops, and he gets the spiritual body. Both things happen simultaneously.

**QUESTION:** Does the devotee realize the spiritual body like in a vision before he leaves this body?

**ANSWER:** Yes, internally, he has a vision, but he does not get the spiritual body. He gets it after death.

[See also: Līlā-smaraṇam]

## 108. Śikhā

**QUESTION:** Do we have to wear śikhā?

**ANSWER:** *Brāhmaṇas* and all other twice born wear sacred thread and śikhā. These are necessary requirements to do ritual ceremonies, or *yajña*. The śikhā is also a sign of a Vaiṣṇava. You can wear a śikhā or not. It is not compulsory to wear it.

## 109. Śikṣāṣṭakam

**QUESTION:** What does the second verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* mean, that there are no rules for chanting and there are so many names of Kṛṣṇa, but still I do not have any attachment?

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis  
tatrārpitā niyamitah smarane na kālāḥ  
etādṛṣī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi  
durdaivam idṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

“O Bhagavān, You have many Names in which You have invested all Your potencies. There is no prescribed time for remembering them. Despite of this grace of Yours, I am so unfortunate that I have not achieved attachment for chanting [because of my offences].” (CC Antya 20.17)

**ANSWER:** This verse explains that Bhagavān’s Name has all the power of Bhagavān. This is His great mercy on the person who chants His Name. Bhagavān becomes attracted to the chanter considering that, “This is My own person because he is chanting My name.” The first part of this verse, *nāmnām akāri bahudhā*, means that all the potency is available to the chanter.

The second part says that there are no rules or regulations for remembering the Name. He can be remembered under all conditions and circumstances, whether one is in a clean or unclean state. In all

states, the Name has its potency. Its potency is not dependent on anything else. Other processes, such as sacrifice, have their power only because of certain circumstances. Such rules are not applicable to the Name. In the rest of the verse, He explains that although such is the case, He does not have any attachment to chanting.

Three things are mentioned here:

- 1) Bhagavān's mercy.
- 2) Because of His mercy, there is no restriction as to when one can remember the Name.
- 3) All the power is invested in the Name.

QUESTION: How does one get this attachment?

ANSWER: If one has the knowledge that the Name is the best or super-most thing, and if one does not have any doubt, then one naturally has a desire for chanting the Name. When you know that something is good for you or it will give you the highest purpose of your life, then there is a natural hankering for such a thing. So this faith is required and then one will develop a natural attachment.

QUESTION: In the fourth śloka of Śikṣāṣṭakam, Mahāprabhu prays that He only wants pure devotional service birth after birth, and in the fifth śloka that somehow He has fallen into this ocean of birth and death and wants to come out of it and attain Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Is that not contradictory?

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim  
kavitam vā jagad-īśa kāmāye  
mama janmani janmanīśvare  
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi*

"O Master of the universe, I do not desire material wealth, materialistic followers, a beautiful wife, or poetic abilities. All I want is unmotivated devotional service to You in every life." (4)

*ayi nanda-tanuja kinkaram  
patitam mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau  
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-  
sthita-dhūli-saḍṛśam vicintaya*

"O son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your servant who has fallen in this horrible ocean of birth and death. Please out of compassion on me, consider me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet." (5)

ANSWER: The fifth śloka also has the same meaning. To consider oneself as a dust particle means to consider oneself as a servant.



**QUESTION:** Is He not praying that He wants to get out of the material world?

**ANSWER:** No. The verse says, "I am in this material world, so just consider me as a dust particle." This means, "consider me as Your servant."

**QUESTION:** In the next verse, the sixth verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, He prays, "when will my eyes be filled with tears of love, my hair stand on end and my voice falter ..." Should a devotee actually pray for ecstatic symptoms or desire this state of consciousness?

*nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā  
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā  
pulkair nīcitam vapuḥ kada  
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati*

"When will flows of tears roll down from my eyes, my voice falter, and the hairs on my body stand erect as I chant Your Holy Name?" (6)

**ANSWER:** This prayer is not for the symptoms, but for the absorption, which bring the symptoms.

The internal mood can be understood only through external symptoms. The internal meaning of this verse is not in the word meaning, but in the intention behind it. Otherwise, His prayers in the previous verses do not tally with this verse. So, the primary meaning is rejected and the implied meaning is taken, which is: "When will I be absorbed like this and when will I take your Name and think about You?"

There is a whole sect of people who only practice how to cry. Their *sādhana* is doing *kīrtana* and practicing crying. They become quite adept at crying. They roll on the ground and shake their bodies. Although for us it may look like a joke, they do it seriously.

The actual absorption, however, does not come by training oneself to manifest external symptoms, because this is an internal feeling that cannot be generated by external action. Those who believe they can, accept the theory that if one makes oneself cry, then one day one will actually cry for real. They think that if one enacts external symptoms, then one will also get the corresponding feeling; this is their principle. So, instead of coming from inside out, they go from outside in.

QUESTION: Are they not successful?

ANSWER: Obviously, they cannot be successful. From our point of view, they are not successful, but from their point of view, they feel successful. For practicing like this, you do not need any prayer to Bhagavān. There is no need for His potency to manifest. They think that they can force it by practice.

It is like practicing *hāsyā-yoga*, or the *yoga* of laughing, causing yourself to laugh. Laughing, they say, frees one from tension. When there is no happiness in life, you have to practice like this to get some happiness. It is very popular now. They have one particular day now, called international laughing day.

QUESTION: This capacity to actually become absorbed, then simply happens by grace, and it cannot be generated by one's own endeavor?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: So the *sādhaka* should simply be patient and expect the grace.

ANSWER: This is what Mahāprabhu is asking for when He prays, "Please bless Me!"

QUESTION: When that grace actually comes or manifests, it does not depend on external circumstances. It can be anywhere under any circumstances?

ANSWER: It can be anywhere.

## 110. Smaraṇam (Remembrance, Concentration, Fixing of the Mind)

QUESTION: How can we overcome obstacles in *smaraṇam*, like falling asleep, having no interest, etc?

ANSWER: These disturbances come in the process of *yoga*, but not in *uttama-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is based upon spontaneous attraction. When you are attracted to *bhakti*, then your mind does not run to other objects that are not related to *bhakti*.

In *yoga-mārga*, however, because there is no interest, they have to fix the mind by force. There, the process is: If you are feeling sleepy, then you have to wake yourself, if your mind is running here and there, then you have to bring it back if you feel desires, then you have to give them up, and if you get absorbed in some object, then you have to remove the mind from it. Basically, whatever the obstruction is, you have to do the opposite of that to bring the mind back.

In *bhakti-mārga*, because you have a liking for it, this does not happen. This type of thing happens when a person does not have interest. You will fall asleep listening to a class or lecture, if you do not like it; but if the topic is to your liking, no matter whether it is material or spiritual, you will not fall asleep. In fact, even if we are feeling sleepy, we will wake up if the subject matter is of interest to us. In *bhakti*, the person takes to the process and surrenders himself and he has no other goal. When the goal is fixed on *bhakti*, then the mind remains within the field of *bhakti* and then all these problems do not come. But if they come, like in the yogic process, you have to bring the mind back.

**QUESTION:** It should not become a problem if one cannot fix the mind?

**ANSWER:** If you are surrendered, then fixing the mind is not important, and if you are not interested in it, then no matter how much you try, the mind will not be fixed. The mind will go to the object of one's interest, because this is its natural tendency.

**QUESTION:** If we cannot concentrate properly during *japa*, does that mean that we haven't surrendered yet?

**ANSWER:** Obviously, because the mind goes to whatever interests you have, and if you are interested in something other than chanting *japa*, your mind will leave *japa* and go to that other thing. When the interest is in *japa*, then it will remain on *japa*.

The principle in the *yoga* process is that the mind is related to the breathing. So, they try to control the breathing through *prāṇāyāma*. When *prāṇa*, the life air, is controlled through *prāṇāyāma*, then the mind also becomes controlled. The slower the breathing, the slower is the movement of the mind. Therefore, they try to reduce the breathing.

Saubhari Muni was doing *kumbhaka* (not taking a breath for a long time). He was living without breathing. Then the mind loses its activity. It is a mechanical process, and not very stable. It is not

that the mind has actually become attracted to something and thus will remain fixed on the object of attraction or love, as in the case of *bhakti*. *Kumbhaka* is not its natural state. It is as if by force you are trying to resist the mind or make it weak by not supplying air. This does not purify the mind. This is shown in the history of yogīs, such as Saubhari Muni. He controlled his mind for a long time, but then it slipped back. In *bhakti*, however, this does not happen because one gets a natural inclination for *bhakti*. One likes to do service for Bhagavān. Then the mind becomes stable without any external force.

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of the series of verses in the Twelfth Chapter of the Gītā, where Kṛṣṇa is saying: fix your mind on Me, or do *karma-yoga*, or do work for Me, or do *niṣkāma-karma*, or do *jñāna*?

**ANSWER:**

*mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya  
nivasīṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ*

*atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram  
abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchāptum dhanañjaya*

*abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si mat-karma-paramo bhava  
mad-artham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi*

*athaitad apy aśakto 'si kartum mad-yogam āśritāḥ  
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*

*śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate  
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram*

“Fix your mind only on Me and let your intelligence rest in Me. Then you will live only in Me. There is no doubt about it. But if you cannot fix your mind steadily on Me, O Dhanañjaya, then seek to attain Me by repeated practice. If however you are unable to steadily practice in this manner, then be devoted to working for Me. Even while working for My sake, you will attain perfection. But if you cannot do even this, then taking shelter of My *yoga* and being self-controlled, offer all the fruits of your actions to Me. Better than practice is to be mindful of Me, and better than being mindful is meditation, because by meditation one renounces the fruits of actions, and by renunciation one attains peace.” (Gītā 12.8-12)

*Mat-karma-paramo bhava* means surrender to Me and then work for Me. The previous two verses are about fixing the mind, which



means to have attachment, because when one's mind is fixed, then naturally one works. If that is not possible, then at least one should work for Kṛṣṇa after surrendering oneself, and that also will lead to the attainment of *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** This fixing of the mind does not mean *rāgānugā-bhakti*, or does it?

**ANSWER:** No, it is not about *rāgānugā-bhakti*. These verses are just talking about fixing the mind.

First, you have to understand what *rāgānugā-bhakti* means. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* means to follow in the footsteps of *rāgātmikā bhaktas*. The definition of *uttama-bhakti* is given in the *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam* verse (BRS 1.1.11). *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is not anything that is to be instructed. *Rāga* means attachment, and attachment cannot be instructed.

*Bhakti* is not a result of certain physical actions. *Bhakti* means developing a liking to do service, and that liking does not come by any action. Attachment does not develop just because I tell you to be attached to somebody. People have the misconception that if I perform *sādhana*, then I will become attached, but this never happens.

*kṛti-sādhyā bhavet sādhyā-  
bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā  
nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya  
prākṛtyaṁ hṛdi sādhyatā*

"That *bhakti*, which is executed by the effort of one's senses and which fructifies in *bhāva*, is called *sādhana bhakti*. The appearance of the eternally existent *bhāva* in the heart is called fructification." (BRS 1.2.2)

*Bhakti* comes from the *nitya-siddha* devotee, and that is not the result of fixing your mind. It comes by the mercy of the eternal associates of Bhagavān.

**QUESTION:** What do you mean by fixing the mind?

**ANSWER:** There is no riddle to it. Fixing the mind means fixing the mind. If the mind is fixed, then everything else is fixed. You are where your mind is. If your mind is not here then that is useless. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says first, "Fix your mind." But it never happens. Therefore, He says, "If you cannot do this, practice it." Otherwise, what is the need for Him to say it? Fixing the mind is not in our

control. If I tell you to fix the mind and you can do it, then you must be already a perfect person.

QUESTION: How do I understand the following verse:

"If you cannot take to this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind." (Gītā 12.12)

ANSWER: The translation that you are reading is wrong.

QUESTION: What is the sequence in these verses?

ANSWER: The sequence in Gītā 12.8-11 is the same as in Gītā 12.12: Fix the mind; if you cannot do it, then you practice. If you cannot do it, then you work for me. If you cannot do that, then *karmārpaṇa*, which Kṛṣṇa said is the lowest step. That is what He is saying, and after that, He is giving the same instruction again in Gītā 12.12.

QUESTION: When chanting I often feel sleepy. Aside from attaining a higher platform of devotion, is there a practice that we can do to fix the mind better during *japa*?

ANSWER: Sleeping, or the mind running here and there during *japa*, does not happen on the path of pure devotion. These things happen if one is following other paths, like *yoga*, *jñāna-mārga*, etc; because when one takes shelter of guru and surrenders to the guru, then he does not have independence. He is surrendered to the guru. When he does not have independence or any independent desires, then the mind cannot go anywhere else, because the mind runs here and there out of attachment to other things.

There are so many desires lying in the heart, and these desires create disturbances or make you feel sleepy because you are interested in them and not in pure devotion. But on this path there is no such thing. There is absolute oneness with the guru's heart. Therefore there are no other desires at all. Then there is no possibility of sleeping, the mind running here and there, or having no interest in devotion. These things do not exist.

Fixing the mind is recommended when a person keeps his mind independent. This is the process in *yoga-mārga*: *pratyāhāra* (you do not control your mind and senses). Then you slowly

progress. It is because of the mixed *guṇas* that the mind sometimes runs, sometimes falls asleep, and sometimes becomes disturbed while you are chanting. Some try to keep the mind in *sattva-guṇa* by following rules and regulations. This is a very lengthy process and the success is very rare. Even if some success is there, it is only temporary.

The example of Saubhari Muni is given in the *Bhāgavatam*. He was trying to control his senses by doing *pratyāhāra*, but even after controlling them for such a long period of time, again a desire came. That is because he was not following the path of *bhakti*, surrendering to the guru, and working for the pleasure of the guru and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, an independent desire came. So these things happen only on other paths.

In *uttama-bhakti*, there is absolutely no such independence or independent motive. These things do not exist. This is the path of transcendental *śraddhā*, in which a person is immediately beyond the *guṇas*. So when he is beyond the *guṇas*, then all these things, which are results of the *guṇas*, do not exist at all. There is no question of his mind running for something else. The possibility itself does not exist. Transcendental *śraddhā* is the internal potency of Bhagavān, and thus the interest is only in devotion. Fixing the mind and *uttama-bhakti* are two separate things.

QUESTION: How do we remember Bhagavān during *sevā*?

ANSWER: Remembrance of Bhagavān comes by the grace of the guru. In the beginning, we do service sincerely to please the guru, and when the guru is pleased, Kṛṣṇa becomes simultaneously pleased. Then by His grace, you are blessed with remembrance. After that no conscious effort is made, as it has become your nature. But if one does not do service sincerely, it also has the adverse effect. Just as their [guru and Kṛṣṇa's] hearts melt by favorable service and then you get their grace, in the same way, when service is done with a cheating propensity, then their hearts become hard towards such a person. Then there is no possibility of mercy.

QUESTION: On whom should one meditate—guru or Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: This path of *uttama-bhakti* is not a path of dualism. It is not *bheda-tattva*, that the guru is separate from Kṛṣṇa. *Bhakti* is the path of *abheda*, it is *advaya-tattva*. There is no such preference that I meditate on Kṛṣṇa or I meditate on guru. There is no difference between the guru and Kṛṣṇa. The other paths are the paths of *bheda*, where they make a distinction like that.

**QUESTION:** Although I am trying, I do not have this absorption in *sevā*, as we are hearing about in *Bhakti Sandarbha*. How can we get it?

**ANSWER:** It will happen in due course of time. If one continues the service without a break, with a respectful mood, and with determination, then only it is possible. Because we have so many material impressions from so many lifetimes, to out-do that will take some time.

**QUESTION:** I heard that the main limb of *rāgānugā-bhakti* is *smaraṇam* (remembrance of Bhagavān). Can you give more details about the five stages of *smaraṇam*?

According to Jīva Gosvāmī (*Bhakti Sandarbha* 278), there are five stages in the evolution of *smaraṇam*:

- 1) To think of Bhagavān in a general manner is *smaraṇam*.
- 2) Controlling the mind from other objects and to fix the mind, in general, on Bhagavān is *dhāraṇā*.
- 3) To specifically think of Bhagavān's form, or name, etc., is *dhyāna*.
- 4) Remembering without any break like the flow of nectar is *dhruvānusmṛti*.
- 5) When only the object of meditation remains manifest, without even being conscious of one's own self it is *samādhi*.

**ANSWER:** *Smaraṇam*, or remembrance, is not the prime factor in *rāgānugā*. The description that you are giving refers to *vaidhī-bhakti*.

*Rāgānugā* is the same as *uttama-bhakti*, and *uttama-bhakti* is *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*, which means favorable service to Kṛṣṇa. Service is not just *smaraṇam*. *Smaraṇam* implies that you remain just in one place and chant or remember. How will you have a feeling of attachment to Bhagavān in that?

*Rāgānugā* is defined as a loving relationship. Just as materialistic people are always attached to sense pleasures and their minds are never released from that attachment, in *uttama-bhakti* one has a similar attachment to Kṛṣṇa. When attachment is there, the person cannot just sit in one place and remember. You should try to understand the character of great devotees, such as Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī.



Rāgānugā-sādhana is described as:

*kṛti-sādhyā bhavet sādhyā-  
bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā  
nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya  
prākṛtyam hṛdi sādhyatā*

"That *bhakti*, which is executed by the effort of one's senses and which fructifies in *bhāva*, is called *sādhana bhakti*. The appearance of the eternally existent *bhāva* in the heart is called fructification." (BRS 1.2.2, quoted in CC Madhya 22.105)

You perform *sādhana*, and that is also by the grace of a devotee. It begins with *śraddhā*: *ādau-śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* means trust in the words of guru and *sāstra*. You do service and then the *bhāva* of the *nitya-siddha* devotee, which is a loving sentiment for Bhagavān, meaning the desire to do favorable service, appears in your heart. Once the *bhāva* appears in your heart, you will not just sit and remember. This *nitya-siddha bhāva* means the *bhāva* of devotees like Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs. So you have to see whether they were just sitting, doing *smaraṇam* or whether they performed service. Or take the devotees who are described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Were they just sitting down, doing *smaraṇam* or were they doing *sevā*, *paricaryā*? *Uttama-bhakti* is *paricaryā*, or service, because that alone is going to please the guru and Bhagavān.

This whole idea of just doing *smaraṇam* or *līlā-smaraṇam* was propagated later, sometime after the disappearance of Mahāprabhu and the Gosvāmīs. But *līlā-smaraṇam* is not the prime thing in *rāgānugā-bhakti*. It is there, but it is not the main thing.

The main thing is service, because the very definition of *bhakti* is *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*. *Anuśīlanam* includes all activities, not just *smaraṇam*. So service has to be done, and then the *nitya-siddha bhāva* will appear. *Bhāva* also means service.

Whatever the characteristic of a perfect devotee is, that is the *sādhana* for a practitioner, and whatever they have achieved and are doing naturally, that you do by practice. They do it naturally, because they are perfected, and you practice it. So then you have to see if these perfected devotees are just sitting in one place with their bead bags or if they are performing service. They are performing service, and their service has to be your *sādhana*. You should follow and do whatever the perfect devotees are doing. This is the meaning of *rāgānugā*. This is called *sādhana*. This is called *kṛti-sādhyā* and when you do that, then their *bhāva* will appear in you.

**QUESTION:** A day has 24 hours, you sleep, eat, chant, and do a little service, but still there are so many hours where one can be independent. What can be done to fill up the day?

**ANSWER:** You should remember Kṛṣṇa and always know that you are not independent. Kṛṣṇa controls everything, your life air, your life span, your bodily movements. Everything is under His control. So there is no question of independence. This independent feeling is only for practical purpose. This does not mean that just because everything is controlled by Kṛṣṇa, that you have no role to play. You have to act, but internally you always contemplate, "I am under His control." Then you will not feel that you are independent.

**QUESTION:** If one is on the platform of *uttama-bhakti*, the mind is not flickering, as it does when one is on the other paths. But if we are still not able to control the mind, can we then use the help of other paths to control the mind?

**ANSWER:** You can take help.

## 111. Spiritual Personalities

**QUESTION:** Who is Nityānanda in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*?

**ANSWER:** Nityānanda is Balarāma.

**QUESTION:** Can we address Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī as mother, as some people do in Vrindavan?

**ANSWER:** Ultimately She is the mother of the universe, but how a devotee addresses Her, depends on his *bhāva*. In our line, we do not address Her as mother, because She is in *parakiya-rasa* with Kṛṣṇa, which means that She is unmarried and without any children.

**QUESTION:** Before they came to Vrindavan, Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī were married and had children. Why did they leave them?

**ANSWER:** Rūpa and Sanātana were family men and left their families and residence. But later their family members came and helped them in Vraja. Sanātana Gosvāmī's son was Rājendra. His *samādhi* is at Rādhā Kuṇḍa towards the canal. Their family members were influenced by the Gosvāmīs and were appreciative of their work.

QUESTION: Were they Muslims?

ANSWER: No, Rūpa and Sanātana were *brāhmaṇas*. They were ministers of the Muslim king Hussain Shah.

QUESTION: Is it true that Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote *Hamsa-dūta* before he met Mahāprabhu?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: How can this be possible, because he describes a very elevated mood of separation?

ANSWER: He was an associate of Bhagavān, so he knew it already. Even before meeting Śrī Caitanya, Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs were studying the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and following it. They were already devoted to the *Bhāgavatam*, therefore Śrī Caitanya chose them to propagate the message of the *Bhāgavatam*. Otherwise, if someone is not devoted to the *Bhāgavatam*, why would Mahāprabhu choose a person like that?

QUESTION: Did Arjuna get *dīkṣā* or *śikṣā* from Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER: Arjuna did not take *dīkṣā* from Kṛṣṇa. In fact, he did not even take *śikṣā*. Arjuna was playing the role of a common human being. When a person is in some difficult situation, he approaches somebody and says; "Please help me. Give me some good instructions." But generally no one takes instructions. Arjuna did not follow what Kṛṣṇa said, so to say that he was a disciple of Kṛṣṇa is not really true.

QUESTION: He did not follow?

ANSWER: No, he kept on arguing for 18 chapters.

QUESTION: Eventually he did follow, because he fought the battle of Kurukṣetra.

ANSWER: Of course, later on he followed, because he had no choice. The mentality of a human being is depicted here. If Arjuna was really surrendered and Kṛṣṇa told him to fight, then he would have just fought, but he did not. Instead he kept on arguing with Kṛṣṇa.

This means that Arjuna had the attitude, "You give the instruction, and if I like it I will take it, but if I do not like it, then I will not take it." This is not the way one should take instructions. This is why Kṛṣṇa had to say "You are my confidential friend. Now, I am going to tell you the topmost secret." And after revealing the secret, finally He said, "Do as you like." People in the material world act like Arjuna. They say things that they do not mean.

When Arjuna saw all these people on the battlefield, he was confused, and only because he was in that confused state, did he ask Kṛṣṇa to help. So when Arjuna was confused, he said, "Please give me instructions." When you are troubled, you go to somebody and want something for your sake, so that you know what to do. There is no question of *dīkṣā* or *śikṣā*.

QUESTION: Kṛṣṇa gave instructions to Uddhava to let the flow of knowledge continue. Were Uddhava or Arjuna *dīkṣā*-disciples of Kṛṣṇa or were these instructions for everybody?

ANSWER: Uddhava is an eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa did not give *dīkṣā* to anybody. *Dīkṣā* is given by *ācāryas*, who are *brāhmaṇas*, but Kṛṣṇa was a *kṣatriya*.

QUESTION: I heard that Kṛṣṇa had only two disciples, Uddhava and Arjuna.

ANSWER: "Disciples" means that Kṛṣṇa gave instruction, not that He was sermonizing. He was not starting a *gurukula* or something like that.

QUESTION: In his previous life Nārada Muni met four sages, who were actually the four Kumāras, and in his next life, Nārada Muni was the brother of the four Kumāras. How is that possible? Did they live before or are they the same personalities?

ANSWER: These two stories belong to different *kalpas*; they are not from the same *kalpa*. In one *kalpa*, they may be brothers, but in another *kalpa*, they may not be.

QUESTION: Nārada Muni is here preaching in his spiritual body. Are the Kumāras also here in their spiritual bodies?

ANSWER: Yes, they have spiritual bodies. The purport here is not about the type of body. The idea is to show how *bhakti* descends, to show how somebody becomes a devotee and what the needed qualifications are.



QUESTION: Were Jagāi and Mādhāi in *caitanya-līlā* originally Jaya and Vijaya?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: So how are we to understand that Kṛṣṇa killed Śiśupāla and Dantavakra?

ANSWER: They were coming to participate in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

QUESTION: Yet their curse was only to live three lives as demons, and they got liberated when Kṛṣṇa killed them, but this Jagāi and Mādhāi was the fourth life? How should we understand this?

ANSWER: They are participating in His pastimes, so what do you mean by liberation? They are His eternal associates. They come and play. When Kṛṣṇa comes, He comes with all His associates. They are His own people, whether somebody becomes Jagāi or Nityānanda, they are all His associates. They are part of a divine play. After three births they came back with Kṛṣṇa. So what's the problem?

QUESTION: Regarding Jagāi and Mādhāi, I heard that one got *prema* from Nityānanda and the other from Caitanya, is that true?

ANSWER: No, that is not true.

QUESTION: Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira felt guilty and wanted to perform a sacrifice to destroy the sins he accumulated during the battle of Kurukṣetra. But he was a devotee and fulfilled the will of God, so why was that necessary?

ANSWER: In *varṇāśrama-dharma*, one's life is guided by *smṛti* (books of religious codes), and if you have performed sinful activity, then you have to do atonement according to the *smṛti*. Yudhiṣṭhira was following *smṛti*.

QUESTION: But he was doing his duty?

ANSWER: As a king, he was following *smṛti*. He was not a devotee as you are thinking—giving up everything, etc., because if he were, then everybody would have followed his example. Even non-devotees would have thought, "It is alright to kill others, because the king has also done that, and there is no need to do any atonement." So to set an ideal for the common masses, he followed the *smṛti*, although there was no need for him to do that.

**QUESTION:** How can obstacles be beneficial for a devotee, as when Kuntī was praying for obstacles? In my understanding the only obstacle is ignorance.

**ANSWER:** She is not praying for obstacles, but for miseries. She is not praying for ignorance. No devotee prays for ignorance. Out of ignorance you are trying to equate obstacles with ignorance. Ignorance means that you are doomed. Ignorance is not going to take you anywhere. I have never seen any prayer that says, "Please put me in ignorance." You are extrapolating the meaning of *vipada*.

Obstacle means something like a physical problem. No one says, "Make me mad" or "Take away my intelligence." Nobody would think that way. An obstacle means some physical problem you have to face, such as a loss of wealth.

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning then, that one should pray for misery?

**ANSWER:** Queen Kuntī is an eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa, but she is speaking to give instructions to common people. The mentality of common people is that when they have trouble and no shelter, then they think of God. If they have opulence, they forget God. For them she is saying, "When we have trouble, we always have your association." So she is trying to show that the association of Bhagavān is important and if she gets it only through miseries, then let the miseries come in abundance. So really speaking, she is praying for Kṛṣṇa's association.

**QUESTION:** Why did the husbands of some of the *gopīs* not allow them to go to the *rāsa* dance, so they had to leave their bodies?

**ANSWER:** Some of these *gopīs* still had some other desires; they weren't perfect enough to meet Kṛṣṇa. By stopping them, their desire to meet Kṛṣṇa became more intense, and in this way, they became completely purified.

This is a whole process of explaining or analyzing *anyābhilāṣa*, or other motives. Since they were stopped, their desire to have the association of Kṛṣṇa increased. In this way, they gave up any other desires. They did not die, but rather they gave up other feelings—the other *bhāvas*. This is how they became perfect. That is, basically, an analysis of *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, or freedom from all other motives.

**QUESTION:** Vasudeva and Devakī were praying for many lifetimes for Viṣṇu to become their son. What kind of *bhakti* is this, because in *uttama-bhakti* the devotee does not pray for anything?

ANSWER: Vasudeva and Devakī are eternal associates. There is no need for them to take so many births and ask Kṛṣṇa to become their son. They are His parents, eternally.

Those who are praying like this are other people. Those who did austerities to get Kṛṣṇa as their son were not his actual parents. They were different people. This is to show that people may have the desire to have Bhagavān as their son.

His parents are eternally His parents. It is not that by performing *sādhana* some persons can become His parents. Vasudeva and Devakī are *nitya-siddha* associates.

QUESTION: Is it the two-in-one, that they are eternal associates, and when they appear on earth together with Kṛṣṇa, there are other conditioned *jīvas* who are joining them for that time?

ANSWER: Yes, Vasudeva and Devakī are eternal associates, and some other *jīvas*, who did austerities to get Kṛṣṇa as their son, entered into Vasudeva and Devakī. In this way Kṛṣṇa fulfilled His promise to be their son.

QUESTION: In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, it is mentioned that there are two Prahlādas mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*. There is the one who became the calf while Pṛthu Mahārāja was milking the earth and the one in the *līlā* of Nṛsimhadeva's appearance. Which one is the eternal Prahlāda, who is always together with Śrī Nṛsimhadeva?

ANSWER: The one who milked the earth was the *nitya* Prahlāda.

QUESTION: So at other times is it not the eternal Prahlāda?

ANSWER: Sometimes it is the eternal and at other times it is a *jīva* of this world. But the description is given as if they are just one, so that people do not become confused.

## 112. Śraddhā (Trust)

QUESTION: How can we find out how much of a cheating propensity we have?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is a process that begins with *śraddhā*, which means you make a firm decision that you want to follow this path.

Śraddhā means a firm decision to follow this path sincerely, under all circumstances. This type of firm decision happens by the grace of a devotee.

Generally, people want to know so many things, like *mahā-bhāva*, etc., but if the base is missing, then it is all useless. One will switch from one guru to another and from one process to another. When there is a firm decision then one is free from the cheating propensity.

QUESTION: Is it possible at all for some people in the West, who do not have *śāstrīya-śraddhā* (faith in the meaning of scripture), to attain *bhakti*?

ANSWER: What do you mean by “*bhakti* without *śāstrīya-śraddhā*”?

QUESTION: They do not care for *śāstra*, as it is not part of their culture.

ANSWER: Then what's the meaning of their *bhakti*?

QUESTION: Since they have heard about God and seen some devotee that is engaged in devotional service, they may become curious, but they do not care for *śāstra* at all. Can they attain *uttama-bhakti*?

ANSWER: First, they have to get *śraddhā*. Without *śraddhā*, they will only follow the whims of their mind.

QUESTION: Has this *śraddhā* to be in *śāstra* or can it be in a devotee too?

ANSWER: There is no difference in that. It is not that you can have *śraddhā* in a devotee and not in *śāstra*. This you see in all these cults, because they do not follow *śāstra*. They put faith in some person and follow him. If the guru is a *śāstrīya* guru, then *śraddhā* is in both, guru and *śāstra*. These are not two different things.

It is not possible to get *uttama-bhakti* without first having *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. Without that *śraddhā*, the association with a devotee will only be a social act. For example, people come to Vrindavan for a picnic, and then they also go and see the temples. This is a fashion that has no spiritual meaning and is not related with *bhakti*. They do not know what *bhakti* is. Similarly, they will also go and see a *sādhu*.

QUESTION: How does one get *śāstrīya-śraddhā*?



ANSWER: You get *śāstrīya-śraddhā* by *mahat-saṅga* and *mahat-sevā*, associating with and serving elevated devotees.

When one gets *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, one becomes inspired and determined to perform service free from any cheating propensity. *Śāstrīya-śraddhā* is the *svarūpa-śakti* of Bhagavān. When one gets it, then one becomes inspired to do the right thing.

QUESTION: How should we understand that there are people who are actually serving a *mahat*, but are not getting *śāstrīya-śraddhā*?

ANSWER: They have material motives and do not have a good intention. They are not simple-hearted. Therefore they do not get *śāstrīya-śraddhā* and do not make any spiritual advancement.

QUESTION: In the beginning, somehow or other, we meet an *uttamā-bhakta*, and he is speaking the philosophy. If I have *śraddhā* in this person, is this *śāstrīya-* or *laukika-śraddhā*?

ANSWER: If he is a *śāstrīya* devotee, then the *śraddhā* in him is also *śāstrīya*. If he is speaking *śāstra* and following *śāstra*, then the *śraddhā* in him is also *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. If he is not following *śāstra*, then the *śraddhā* in him is *laukika-śraddhā* (Faith not based on *śāstra*).

QUESTION: Still, it depends on the person to get this *śāstrīya-śraddhā*?

ANSWER: First, the person with whom you associate must be *śāstrīya*, and second, you must be sincere. *Śraddhā* will come from the person only.

QUESTION: Is there also some mixture between *laukika-śraddhā* and *śāstrīya-śraddhā*?

ANSWER: No, there is nothing like that, because *laukika-śraddhā* and *śāstrīya-śraddhā* are antagonistic to each other. The person with *śāstrīya-śraddhā* likes *śāstra* and service to the *sādhus*, but the other one is the exact opposite. He seeks his personal gains above *śāstra* and spiritual goals.

QUESTION: What is the destination of someone with *laukika-śraddhā*? Does he attain higher planets, lower planets, or does he stay on earth?

ANSWER: Up or down does not have any meaning. The question is: Is he interested in spiritual life or not? A person with *laukika-śraddhā* is not interested in the spiritual path, as it does not touch his heart. It is just a means to make money and business, like doing *Bhāgavata-saptāha* or *harināma* for a salary.

QUESTION: Before one attains this transcendental *śraddhā*, is there something like a mixed *śraddhā*, where you have faith in the scriptures, but are not surrendered yet, and later on you become more and more purified? What happens before one attains this transcendental *śraddhā*?

ANSWER: There are three manifestations of the Absolute, as described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. These three are grouped in two divisions on the basis of *sādhana*: one is Bhagavān and the other one is Brahman and Paramātmā.

People who are looking for liberation seek Brahman and Paramātmā. This includes the majority of the transcendentalists, such as *yogīs*, *jñānīs*, or *karmīs*, and even many so-called devotees. They are all ultimately interested in liberation and worship either Brahman or Paramātmā. Their process is not pure *bhakti* and their *śraddhā* is not transcendental *śraddhā*. Generally, their process includes purification of the heart by following their respective *sādhana*. It basically means that they want to elevate their existence in the *guṇas*, from lower *guṇas* to higher *guṇas*, by controlling their sleeping or working habits. Their understanding is, if one becomes situated in *sattva-guṇa*, then one will get knowledge, *sattvāt sañjāyate jñānam* (knowledge comes from goodness). And by *jñāna*, one will get Brahman-realization, which means liberation. At best, they can think of *śānta*, or neutral relationship, which means going to the abode of *Īśvara*. Otherwise, they will mostly think of merging into the Absolute.

This is their process. Therefore they keep on struggling for their goal of trying to purify their existence, but this purification never occurs, because the *guṇas* are always mixed. Therefore, they fluctuate although they may be fixed for a long period of time. But it is not permanent. They can deviate, because they have not attained the internal potency of Bhagavān.

As far as *bhakti* is concerned, it is absolutely transcendental. It has nothing to do with the *guṇas* and is a separate path. It is the energy of Bhagavān, and that energy is not influenced by the external energy at all. It is supremely potent and independent from the external

energy. So when somebody gets *bhakti* by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, then immediately he is liberated. Therefore, it is said that *bhakti* begins on the liberated platform.

The nature of the material or external energy is to take you to the external, or away from God. No matter what you do, your consciousness is always external, even to the extent of thinking of liberation. Therefore, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, this is described as cheating.

Similarly, the characteristic of the internal potency is that it always moves toward Bhagavān. So, whenever somebody gets even a little bit of it, then his mind is completely changed, and he is immediately situated on the liberated platform. There are no deviations after that. For example, we think that Ajāmila was liberated when at the time of his death, he chanted Nārāyaṇa. The reality is that he was already liberated when he decided to name his son Nārāyaṇa. Even before he chanted, when he just thought that he was going to name his son Nārāyaṇa, at that time he was liberated. This fact became manifest later, at the time of death. So he was already a liberated person, a *jīvan-mukta*. This is the power of one having this consciousness. He was not even performing *bhakti*, but *ābhāsa* (a semblance of it). But even this feeling came to him by the mercy of some devotees and not independently.

Therefore, when one is situated on the platform of *śraddhā*, then there is no more deviation nor will one fall down from this platform. This is the meaning that *bhakti* begins from the liberated platform. After this, it is a matter of further improvement, because the mind is always fixed on service. People in the material world are always fixed on materialistic things. These two energies must be understood as two separate phenomena, and there is no overlapping or mixing.

**QUESTION:** This *śraddhā* is a higher concept than I previously thought. There are many devotees who are aspiring to serve the Lord. Is it that they haven't come to the platform of *śraddhā*? What about the philosophy of 1 or 2 % *śraddhā*?

**ANSWER:** The *śraddhā* that you are mentioning is *laukika-śraddhā*, material *śraddhā*. It is not based on a correct understanding of the scriptures and is not coming from proper association. It is based on hearing from people who do not have *śāstrīya-śraddhā*. As you have faith in so many other things, you may also have a similar faith in Kṛṣṇa or the deity. But it is not transcendental.



In transcendental *śraddhā*, right from the beginning, one has *ruci*, or taste, in hearing about Kṛṣṇa. Then he also does *kīrtana*, which means that he remains in the service of Bhagavān and has no interest in material pursuits. This happens right from the beginning.

*śraddhāmṛta-kathāyām me śaśvan mad-anukīrtanam  
pariniṣṭhā ca pūjāyām stutibhiḥ stavanam mama  
ādarah paricaryāyām sarvāṅgair abhivandanam  
mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā sarva-bhūteṣu man-matiḥ  
mad-artheṣv aṅga-ceṣṭā ca vacasā mad-guṇeraṇam  
mayy arpaṇam ca manasaḥ sarva -kāma-vivarjanam  
mad-arthe 'rtha-parityāgo bhogasya ca sukhasya ca  
iṣṭam dattam hutam japtam mad-artham yad vrataṁ tapah  
evam dharmair manuṣyāṇām uddhavātma-nivedinām  
mayi sañjāyate bhaktiḥ ko 'nyo 'rtho 'syāvaśiṣyate*

“Eagerness to hear My nectar-like stories, regular recitation of My pastimes, firm faith in My worship and glorifying Me with beautiful prayers. Being respectful in my service, paying obeisances to Me with the entire body [with 8 limbs namely head, chest, two hands, two knees and feet], giving more respect to My devotees, and seeing all beings as My manifestation. Using all bodily limbs for My service, using one's speech in praising Me, offering one's mind to Me, and giving up all desires for My sake, spending wealth for My worship, giving up sense enjoyment and self-gratification for My sake, performing sacrifices, practicing charity, offering oblations into the sacred fire, chanting *mantras*, observing fasts and other sacred vows, and performing austerity—O Uddhava, by following such righteous principles, devotion to Me develops in the hearts of men who dedicate their self to Me. What other goals remain for such a devotee to be achieved?” (SB 11.19.20-24)

This transcendental *śraddhā* is so powerful that it works on a person who is not offensive even if he does not understand it.

Like the example of Śukadeva Gosvāmī given in the very beginning of the *Bhāgavatam*. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was Brahman realized since birth. Right after his birth he left his house, although his father, Vyāsadeva, was calling him to come back. He did not listen to him. In Brahman-realization, there is no question of any relationship with father or mother. One day, while he was wandering in the forest, he heard some students of Vyāsadeva chanting some verses from the *Bhāgavatam*, which were describing Kṛṣṇa's mercy on Pūtānā. It is mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam* that Śukadeva Gosvāmī left home right after birth, without even taking the sacred thread. This means that



he had no education and thus no knowledge of Sanskrit. Therefore, he had no understanding of the ślokas. Just by the sound of the verses of *Bhāgavatam* he immediately became attracted to Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes. He ran back to the hut of Vyāsa, became his disciple, and studied from him. He says, "I studied *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from my father" (SB 2.1.8). This is the power of *bhakti*. Even if a person does not understand the meaning of the words, still it has influence on him, if heart is free from offenses.

The other example is of Nārada Muni in his previous life. As the young child of a maidservant He was not educated. He was just a boy without any knowledge, but because he was simple-hearted, self-controlled, and willing to serve, just by listening to devotees, his mind was attracted. He was not unhappy when his mother died, because he was thinking that her attachment to him was an obstacle on his spiritual path. This shows how right from the beginning of *bhakti*, a person loses interest in material goals. His goal is only spiritual. This is how the spiritual potency works.

Right from the point of *śraddhā*, a person becomes favorable to Kṛṣṇa. After that he does not fluctuate, leave, or become envious. But when people have *laukika-śraddhā*, sometimes they serve and sometimes they are envious. Ultimately, they will end up in envy, hatred, faultfinding, deception, and so many other problems. These are not part of transcendental *śraddhā*. Transcendental *śraddhā* means *niścaya*, or firm resolve, to serve Kṛṣṇa. This never changes under any circumstances. The resolve remains always fixed.

There is a verse from the Tenth Canto:

*yad-anucarita-līlā-karṇa-pīyūṣa-vipruṭ-  
sakarḍ-ādana-vidhūta-dvandva-dharmā vinaṣṭāḥ  
sapadi gr̥ha-kuṭumbaṁ dīnam utsr̥jya dīnā  
bahava iha vihaṅgā bhikṣu-caryām caranti*

"Just by hearing even once a little drop of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, which are nectar to the ears, all the concepts of the duality of material life are destroyed. Those who hear these pastimes are materially ruined. Many such people have suddenly given up their home and family, and in a wretched state wander here to Vṛndāvana, leading a life of beggars, like birds." (SB 10.47.18)

The *gopīs* are describing that even if only one drop of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes fills their ears, people give up their houses and wander here in Vṛndāvana like beggars. This is also to signify the potency of transcendental *śraddhā*. It immediately elevates you. If you have transcendental *śraddhā*, there is no fluctuation of the mind. This must be understood.

When *bhakti* was propagated by Śrī Caitanya and the Gosvāmīs, then for one or two generations it remained pure. After that, as the case with most paths, it became polluted. People have the general tendency to exploit spiritual paths for material gains. Then it was made into a business, which means that you preach and get followers for the purpose of making money. And for that you have to say things that are attractive to materialistic persons. Such people have a big following. When a person who has no understanding comes in contact with them, he will follow them and become influenced. After that, it becomes very difficult for him to understand the Reality, because their so-called spiritual experience is just material. Whatever you do gives you an experience, whether it is sports, chess, or business. You are constantly getting experiences from everywhere. People on so-called spiritual paths also have some realizations and they start thinking that these experiences are transcendental realizations. They will think, "How can this be material?" Then it is very difficult to understand the real path, because they have become attached to the wrong path and its experiences. But the test of something transcendental is that it ever flows toward Bhagavān and is ever increasing.

**QUESTION:** This means that this resolve is only possible by mercy?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** If I desire to have this resolve, and if, by mercy, I have a genuine determination, then there is no more flickering in the *guṇas*?

**ANSWER:** Yes, then there is no more flickering. There are no more doubts after that, because this is the meaning of resolve—no doubts. Flickering happens, when a doubt comes.

**QUESTION:** I do not feel that I have any doubts, and I know that *bhakti* is the only thing, but still the *guṇas* are acting. So maybe some doubts are there, that I do not know of?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** What is it when one has got *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, but is only able to make slow progress?

**ANSWER:** When one has *śāstrīya-śraddhā*, then one will advance very fast, provided one avoids offenses. You should avoid committing offenses knowingly, respect the guru, and follow him.

**QUESTION:** Are these three stages of *kaniṣṭha*, *madhyama*, and *uttama adhikārī*s progressive stages of consciousness for attaining *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** There are three types of *śraddhā*: *kaniṣṭha*, *madhyama* and *uttama*. Depending on the *śraddhā*, the classification is made, so that a person can understand his position. If no definition is given, then it may look like everybody is on the same level, because everybody has *śraddhā*. Three different classes are defined: One who has superior *śraddhā*, one who has medium, and one, whose *śraddhā* is very weak and thus can be disturbed.

**QUESTION:** One grows from one stage of *śraddhā* to another?

**ANSWER:** Yes, by practice, avoiding offenses, associating, and hearing, one will become more and more firm.

**QUESTION:** Is faith something that will always increase?

**ANSWER:** *Śraddhā* always increases if one acts favorably, serves properly, and avoids offenses. It is like a fire. A fire, if supplied with fuel, will increase. Although the quality of the fire, whether it is small or a big, is the same, still in quantity it can be more or less. Ultimately, *śraddhā* will culminate in *prīti* or *prema*. In the beginning, you have complete trust in the words of *śāstra* and act accordingly. Then it increases. It will come to the level where you will be free from all offenses; then you will be realized.

In case of material *śraddhā*, it goes up and down and can completely change, but in spiritual *śraddhā* this does not happen, unless one becomes offensive. *Śraddhā* comes by the grace of Bhagavān. As a result of this, one begins liking the *kathā*. It is because of the causeless mercy of Bhagavān, through His devotees, that a person develops interest in hearing about Bhagavān. From that point onwards, it grows.

**QUESTION:** If one doesn't have a proper vision about the guru, is that because of a lack of faith? Faith is also given by the mercy of Bhagavān. How can a person advance if he does not have the proper vision of the guru? And is this also coming by mercy?

**ANSWER:** *Śraddhā* means a proper decision, or to make a proper resolve. It also means freedom from all doubts. That happens when one has the correct knowledge, or understanding. God's grace gives



sat-saṅga, or association, of a guru or a saintly person. Then one hears and clarifies one's doubts and understands that this path is good for him. Then one makes a firm decision and that is *śraddhā*.

People in the material world make decisions, thinking, "If I do this, I will get some benefit" or "This is very beneficial for me." A similar type of decision has also to be made here. This happens by the mercy of Bhagavān. He has given you the equipment to make the decision. He gives you the possibility to associate and hear, and if you have doubts, then you clarify your doubts. Once your doubts have been clarified, you make a firm decision and follow it. This is the mercy of Bhagavān. Once you have made a decision, then you should follow that properly.

QUESTION: Previously I surrendered to one devotee, who was my guru, and another devotee, from whom I took shelter. I saw him as the personification of God, because he was my guru. I felt I received a lot of help from him and I could see Kṛṣṇa helping me through him. I think that on account of that, I ultimately came here to this place.

ANSWER: Wherever you have sincere *śraddhā*, this will lead you to the correct destination. God gives inspiration when He wants to bless somebody, because it is difficult for a person to make the right decision. God inspires a person to put this faith in somebody.

If one is sincere and straightforward, then God will inspire him to come to the right place. But if one is not sincere, then one is led to a similar [insincere] destination. Surrender to an *aśāstriya* guru does not lead to a *śāstriya* guru. One comes to the *śāstriya* guru by the causeless grace of Kṛṣṇa.

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QUESTION: How does *śraddhā* manifest in the next life if one doesn't develop *śraddhā* in this lifetime?

ANSWER: There are two kinds of *śraddhā*: *laukika-śraddhā* and *śāstriya-śraddhā*. A person with *laukika-śraddhā* does not have any real determination; therefore, he will cheat knowingly and have to take birth again and again. This kind of *śraddhā* is unstable. Such a person pursues the spiritual path only for material gain, facilities, etc. Such a person considers himself as independent from the guru.

Somebody with *śāstriya-śraddhā*, however, endeavors with fixed determination, and if he does not attain his goal, then in his next



life he will continue from where he left. However, for a devotee there is no question of a next life, because he endeavors with full determination.

## 113. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

**QUESTION:** Did Śukadeva Gosvāmī learn the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from Vyāsadeva from the very beginning of the First Canto, first verse, and did he speak it like that to Mahārāja Parīkṣit?

**ANSWER:** Yes. He heard it and spoke it in that form, as it was written, from the very first verse (*janmādy asya yataḥ*) to the last verse of Twelfth Canto, SB 12.13.23 (*nāma-saṅkīrtanam yasya*).

**QUESTION:** Who spoke all the Purāṇas? I heard they were spoken by Romaharṣaṇa Sūta but the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was spoken by Sūta Gosvāmī. How are we to understand this?

**ANSWER:** Romaharṣaṇa is also Sūta. Romaharṣaṇa was the father, and *Bhāgavatam* was spoken by Sūta Gosvāmī, the son of Romaharṣaṇa. His name was Ugraśravā. Sūta is the title.

**QUESTION:** So the first 17 Purāṇas were spoken by his father, Romaharṣaṇa Sūta?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Why didn't he speak the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*?

**ANSWER:** Romaharṣaṇa, after he had recited 17 Purāṇas, was killed by Balarāma. Then his son Ugraśravā Sūta Gosvāmī recited *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

**QUESTION:** What are the three verses of the *Bhāgavatam* that Śukadeva Gosvāmī heard from the disciples of Vyāsadeva, and which motivated him to come back and study *Bhāgavatam* from his father? Also, what is their meaning?

**ANSWER:** The verses are SB 1.9.20, 3.2.23, and 10.21.5.

Verses 1.9.20 and 21 speak about the passing away of Bhīṣmadeva in the presence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

*yaṁ manyase mātuleyaṁ priyaṁ mitraṁ suhṛttamam  
akaroḥ sacivaṁ dūtaṁ sauhṛdād atha sārathim*

*sarvātmanaḥ sama-dṛṣo hy advayasyānahanākṛteḥ  
tat-kṛtaṁ mati-vaiṣamyam niravadyasya na kvacit*

“Whom you think to be your maternal uncle’s son, beloved friend, and greatest well-wisher, and whom out of affection you made your counsellor, envoy, and charioteer, He, the soul of the universe, who has equal vision toward all, who is one without second, free from false pride, flawless, and does not discriminate between good or bad in regard to all these divergent duties.”

Verse 3.2.23 is about Kṛṣṇa’s mercy on Pūtanā:

*aho bakī yaṁ stana-kāla-kūtaṁ  
jighāmsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī  
lebhe gatiṁ dhātry-ucitāṁ tato ‘nyam  
kaṁ vā dayālum śaraṇam vrajema*

“Oh! How wonderful is this! Pūtanā, the wicked one, although feeding Kṛṣṇa her breast smeared with Kālakūṭa poison to kill Him, she attained the post befitting a nurse. Who is more merciful than Kṛṣṇa whose shelter we can take?”

In verse 10.21.5, the gopīs glorify the song of Kṛṣṇa’s flute:

*barhāpīdaṁ naṭa-vara-vapuḥ kaṇayoh kaṇikāraṁ  
bibhṛad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśaṁ vaijayantīm ca mālām  
randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan gopa-vṛndair  
vṛndāranyaṁ sva-pada-ramaṇaṁ prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ*

“Bearing the handsome appearance of a superb dancer, wearing a plume of peacock feathers and ear ornaments of kaṇikāra flowers, wearing a yellow cloth of golden radiance, having a wreath of vaijayantī flowers, filling the holes of the flute with the honey of His lips, and being extolled by the gopas with various songs, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, along with the herd of cattle, entered Vṛndāvana, which He had rendered love inspiring by His footprints.”

The description of Śukadeva’s attraction was to refute Māyāvāda, or impersonal philosophy. Unless this impersonal philosophy is rooted out from one’s mind, one’s bhakti cannot be pure, because in

pure *bhakti*, God is accepted as a real person. Impersonalists do not accept His Personality as ultimately real.

God personally wants that people follow the path of devotion, because it is based on love. Unless there are feelings of love towards Bhagavān and His creation, this creation will not continue. Viṣṇu is in charge of the protection or the maintenance. That maintenance is only possible when people have love.

Impersonalism means no attachment, because it is based on the idea that any attachment leads to bondage. Impersonalists do not want any attachment, whether it is to God, His creation, or anything else. Therefore, they try to prove that the world is *mithyā* (that it does not exist in the real sense). Such a concept is ultimately atheistic.

The whole idea behind this episode of Śukadeva Gosvāmī's leaving home and then coming back to study *Bhāgavatam* is to destroy the philosophy of impersonalism. This was Vyāsa's real intention. He showed that even a person who was completely Brahman-realized, gave up this concept. His heart was captivated by Kṛṣṇa's qualities, and then he studied the *Bhāgavatam*. It means that he found something superior to his previous realization.

**QUESTION:** Was Śukadeva's *āveśa*, (absorption) awakened just by hearing about Kṛṣṇa's qualities, especially the quality of how merciful He is?

**ANSWER:** You cannot say awakened, because that implies that it was lying dormant. The *Bhāgavatam* has the power to give that absorption. Jīva Gosvāmī explains that the *Bhāgavatam*, because it is transcendental, can give absorption. Right in the beginning, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says that when one desires to hear it, Bhagavān becomes situated in the heart. This is to show the potency of the *Bhāgavatam*.

**QUESTION:** How is it possible that *jñānīs* like the Four Kumāras become devotees just by smelling the fragrance of the *tulasī* garland of Viṣṇu in *Vaikuṇṭha*?

**ANSWER:** In the material world, there are mainly two tendencies: the desire to enjoy (*bhukti*), and the desire for liberation (*mukti*). *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was written by Vyāsadeva to show that *bhakti* is higher than *mukti* and *bhukti*. Nārada Muni taught this to Vyāsadeva, and Vyāsa himself saw the same in his trance. In the stories of Śukadeva and the Four Kumāras, he depicts that *bhakti*

is higher than *mukti* because even *jīvan-muktas* like Śukadeva and the Kumāras are attracted by Kṛṣṇa and *bhakti*. But, it was not that Kumāras became *bhaktas*. They just experienced that *bhakti* is higher than *mukti*, but they stayed *jñānīs*. This episode exemplifies the superiority of devotion. This is the real purpose behind it.

**QUESTION:** What is the essence of *Uddhava-gītā* in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*?

**ANSWER:** The essence of *Uddhava-gītā* is *bhakti-yoga*. When Kṛṣṇa was leaving, He instructed Uddhava by saying, "I will leave now. Please continue this flow of knowledge in this world." He told him that the essence of all knowledge is devotion to Him.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that Uddhava narrated the *Bhāgavatam* to the queens of Kṛṣṇa at *Kusuma-sarovara*?

**ANSWER:** It was Arjuna who brought the queens of Kṛṣṇa from *Dvārakā* after Kṛṣṇa's departure from the earth. Uddhava had already left before. The *Bhāgavatam* describes that Kṛṣṇa instructed Uddhava to go to *Badarikāśrama*.

**QUESTION:** And Uddhava did not speak the *Bhāgavatam* to the queens of Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** Where?

**QUESTION:** At *Kusuma-sarovara*.

**ANSWER:** Uddhava did not meet the *vraja-vāsīs* when he came here. He met Vidura, as it is described in the *Bhāgavatam*.

**QUESTION:** Uddhava met Vidura in *Vraja*?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*, that Uddhava met Vidura on the bank of the *Yamunā*.

**QUESTION:** Is that story of Uddhava narrating the *Bhāgavatam* to the queens true?

**ANSWER:** I never heard that story.

**QUESTION:** When Uddhava met Vidura, all the associates of Kṛṣṇa, like Nanda Mahārāja, were not manifest anymore?

**ANSWER:** No.



**QUESTION:** The twelfth to fourteenth chapters of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are considered very important because they prove that Kṛṣṇa is Svayaṁ Bhagavān. What is the speciality of these chapters?

**ANSWER:** Brahmā explains who Kṛṣṇa is. He is praying to Kṛṣṇa and explaining in his prayers who Kṛṣṇa is. Brahmā is an authority, and when he speaks, that is authoritative.

**QUESTION:** In the story of the Syamantaka jewel, why did certain persons, like Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā, behave as adversaries to Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** This is to give education to people, as to how human beings should behave. Bhagavān comes to give teachings. He showed the influence of wealth on people, and how one should deal when situations like that occur. Otherwise, there is no other purpose in showing all that.

**QUESTION:** Were they influenced by Kṛṣṇa's *yoga-māyā* to behave like this?

**ANSWER:** Just like when you do a play, what is the influence? It is already decided that in the play certain people are going to take certain roles. Kṛṣṇa performs *rāsa-līlā* or acts like a human being. His associates also act as human beings. Human beings become blind by the greed for wealth. That is depicted in this pastime. As far as *yoga-māyā* is concerned, all of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is orchestrated by her.

**QUESTION:** Does the same principle apply to Jāmbavān, who did not recognize Kṛṣṇa as God and fought with Him?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** There it is also mentioned that the inhabitants of Dvārakā worshiped Durgā when Kṛṣṇa did not return from the cave because He was fighting with Jāmbavān. Why did they worship Durgā?

**ANSWER:** Goddess Durgā is the *śakti*, or power, and ordinary people pray to her in adverse situations. They acted like common people. Kṣatriyas, especially, are devotees of Durgā.

**QUESTION:** Although they were Yadus and had the association of Kṛṣṇa all the time, weren't they really devotees?

ANSWER: They are doing human *līlā*. So their behavior has to resemble local human behavior. *Līlā* is performed resembling the local custom and life style. For example, if you walk from here to Delhi, you cannot figure out where Vṛndāvana ends. The same type of people and land is seen everywhere, and yet Vṛndāvana is transcendental.

So when Kṛṣṇa comes, His people appear with Him and behave like the people of this area, i.e. *kṣatriyas* worshipping Durgā. So the Yadus also worshiped like that and prayed for Kṛṣṇa's welfare. When people want material boons, they pray to the *devas*, just as the *vraja-vāsīs* were doing Indra-*yajña*. They are also devotees, why were they doing Indra-*yajña*? The answer is that this was just a custom.

QUESTION: I thought that the people who were living with Kṛṣṇa, the Yadus, must be all devotees of Him.

ANSWER: Yes, they are devotees.

QUESTION: And this is just a *līlā*.

ANSWER: Yes, they are doing *līlā*. *Līlā* is done like the activities of ordinary people. Kṛṣṇa's associates are always extraordinary, but if everybody would have recognized them as extraordinary, then the *līlā* would not continue. Sometimes they may have demonstrated extraordinary behavior, but not all the time. They followed the custom and lifestyle that was prevalent in those days.

QUESTION: I heard that Śukadeva Gosvāmī, in his past life, was the parrot of Kṛṣṇa, and that in this life, first he was a Brahman realized person. How to understand this, if he is an eternal associate of Bhagavān? Is this a *līlā* or...?

ANSWER: Try to understand the essence of the philosophy and forget all these stories. These stories are there to explain the philosophy. When you teach a kindergarten student to write the alphabet, you teach him, "a" is for apple. In the beginning, the child's intelligence is gross and not refined, so he can only see gross things. He can see and remember the picture of an apple. This leads him to remember and write "a." Once this is achieved, then "a" for "apple" has no meaning, as it has served its purpose. The idea is to learn "a," but that "a" has nothing to do with the apple. If, later when you grow up, you want to do some research as to how "a" is for apple, then that is futile.

These stories have a meaning behind them. Whether Śukadeva Gosvāmī really existed or did not exist, that itself has no meaning. The point is to understand the philosophy, like *dharmah projjhita-kaitavaḥ*. These stories, like Śukadeva being a parrot, are there for passing time, like when you are on *parikramā*. That is all.

*Bhakti* cannot be performed unless one becomes free from the cheating propensity, and one of the greatest cheating propensities is the desire for liberation. Unless one becomes completely free from the desire for liberation, one will not perform *bhakti*, because *mukti* and *bhakti* are completely antagonistic to each other. One, who wants to attain *mukti*, has no interest in *bhakti*. *Mukti* means to renounce everything with the attitude of "Let the whole world burn to ashes, I do not care." One is interested only in one's own salvation, and does not care about anything else. This tendency has to be absolutely removed.

The story of Śukadeva Gosvāmī is explained only for this purpose. Śukadeva was self-realized from birth. Nobody can be more realized than him. He was so realized that he did not even know the difference between male and female. He was completely absorbed in Brahman. But the same person, after hearing three ślokas of the *Bhāgavatam*, came to study it from his father. He, who had run away from home, came back. He studied the whole *Bhāgavatam* from Vyāsadeva, his teacher. It means that *bhakti* is far superior to *mukti*. *Mukti* is so useless that even such a great highly renounced person renounced it. We were talking about how *bhakti* brings *vairāgya*, but consider Śukadeva Gosvāmī. He was highly renounced, yet he became a devotee and then renounced even renunciation. What can be a higher renunciation than that? Who will renounce one's position like this? Then he became a follower of *bhakti-mārga*, the devotional path.

Unless it is established that *bhakti* is superior and *mukti* is inferior, one will not take wholehearted interest in it. The *Bhāgavatam* establishes this fact. This is the essence of the dialogue between Nārada and Vyāsa. Before writing the *Bhāgavatam*, Vyāsa had not clearly explained *uttama-bhakti*. Vyāsadeva explained that in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He explains that he had a son, and the son was born after being 16 years in the womb. This is not a historical fact that Śukadeva Gosvāmī was 16 years in the womb. How did he take birth? It is stated that as soon as he was born, he grew up. So what is the need of showing all this? Stories have to be made to create some interest, because most people are interested only in stories, like "a" is for apple.



The point is not in the story at all. If you try to investigate the story, then you will end up nowhere, because there are so many types of Śukadeva Gosvāmīs. When you read the Mahābhārata you will find that Śukadeva Gosvāmī is married and has children, and there is also Chāyā-śukadeva, another Śukadeva. But this is not the point. The point is the purport behind the story. The *Bhāgavatam* wants to establish *dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavaḥ*. Therefore, different stories are narrated.

For example, in the story of the four Kumāras, it says that they are also Brahman-realized, and they are so great that they even went to Vaikuṇṭha. However, in Vaikuṇṭha they become angry when stopped at Viṣṇu's gate. This is to show that even such renounced people cannot become free from their material *vāsanās*. They were influenced by *rajo-guṇa*. Only *bhakti* makes you completely pure and cleans the heart. They were absorbed in Brahman, naked, and completely renounced. Where is the question of becoming angry? This story basically defeats Māyāvāda. Similarly, the story of Saubhari Muni shows the futility of *yoga*.

These stories are narrated to illustrate the greatness of *bhakti*. The reality, however, is not in the story. The whole purpose is to show that devotion is free from all other motives and selfishness. Unless one comes to this platform, one remains impure, because one still has the propensity to cheat.

**QUESTION:** Is there any sense that some of the stories in the *Bhāgavatam* are not literally or historically true? For example, there is a story about Kṛṣṇa jumping a mountain, which is eight *yojanas* high, but there is no mountain which is eight *yojanas* high. Or in another story, it says Aṣṭāśura's hump was touching the clouds, but how could this be possible? Is there any sense that sometimes there is poetic license that is taken, like when Ugrasena gave *crores* and *crores* of servants in charity? This totals more than the current population of India. Are some of these incidents not to be taken literally?

**ANSWER:** There is no use of taking the literal meaning, and you cannot prove anything historically from these stories. The stories are just like carriers to teach something. The author has an intention that he wants to convey to his audience, and for that he uses a means. We have to look at the purpose behind the story.

There are six ways to understand the purpose of a *śāstra*:

1) To analyze the introduction and the concluding statement of the book.



- 2) What is glorified in it?
- 3) What is repeated?
- 4) What has been established with logic?
- 5) What is the most extraordinary thing?
- 6) What is the fruit that has been stated in it?

These six items have to be analyzed to understand the essence of *śāstra*. This is what the author wants to convey. Otherwise, one will misunderstand it by taking the literal meaning.

There are three ways the instructions are given in *śāstra*:

1) One is like a king as in the Vedas, where the instruction is received as an order, such as “You do this, and don’t do that.” The Vedas speak like that, and they do not explain why it should be done.

2) Second is the Purāṇic style. They speak to the reader like a friend.

3) Third is the *sāhityika* style (implied meaning) and this is like a beloved giving instructions to her lover. It is indirect and spoken in a roundabout way. The literal meaning is not important. *Dhvanyārtha* (implied meaning) is the real meaning. There may be exaggerations. There may be different ways of saying it.

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* uses all these three ways. It is a poetic style, and books like *Kāvyaaprakāśa* and *Dhvanyāloka* give the rules of poetics. The *Bhāgavatam* uses these techniques. Therefore, the literal meaning may not make sense, so you need to take the implied meaning.

**QUESTION:** If that is the case, is there anything that is historically literal or accurate at all?

**ANSWER:** Yes, some things are historically true. This is what I am saying. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* uses all three methods of communicating a message. Some stories actually happened, and some parts are just exaggerations.

The first thing you should understand is that the *Bhāgavatam* is not trying to tell you anything about history. If you try to prove any historical fact from it, then it is not the right book. Its purpose is to establish Kṛṣṇa as Svayam Bhagavān. This is what Vyāsadeva said right in the beginning: *satyaṁ param dhīmahi*. *Satyam* is a name of Kṛṣṇa, and Vyāsa wants to explain what Bhagavān means. Bhagavān means one who is complete in six opulences.

*aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ  
jñāna-vairāgyayoś caiva śaṅṅām bhaga itīgaṇā*

“The six qualities of controlling potency, inconceivable power, fame, wealth, knowledge, and absence of attachment, in their totality are called *bhaga*.” (Viṣṇu Pūrāṇa 6.5.74)

Vyāsa has to show Bhagavān’s *aiśvarya*, knowledge, beauty, etc. All these things have to be established, and to do this, Vyāsa may use the *sāhityika* style. This does not mean that Kṛṣṇa Himself did not exist, but how Vyāsa establishes that fact may not be literal, and so that has to be studied.

The main thing to be understood is that the purpose of the *Bhāgavatam* is to establish Kṛṣṇa as Svayaṁ Bhagavān and, ultimately, to establish *uttama-bhakti*, or *vraja-bhakti*. This is the real purpose of the author. The other things are all secondary. There may be some historical information and there may be some exaggerations.

**QUESTION:** If we undermine or deconstruct the history of the events in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, then what validity does that give to the so-called *līlā* in Goloka Vṛndāvana?

**ANSWER:** It is not that they do not exist at all. It is not that this mountain described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* does not exist at all, but if you measure it, you will not find it to be eight *yojanas* high. Govardhana is there, but it may not be the way it is described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

**QUESTION:** So then it is up to the individual to decide which parts of it are real and which parts are not?

**ANSWER:** No, it is not up to the individual. This is what you have to study from *paramparā*. You have to actually know the style of the *śāstra* to understand it.

Why are you giving just these examples? Everything can be doubted. For example, in the very beginning of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* it says that Śukadeva Gosvāmī was 16 years in the womb of his mother. Who is going to believe that he was for 16 years in the womb? And then right after birth, he started running away. How can somebody walk right after birth? Also why does he run only towards the forest? Since he was a Brahman-realized person, what was the need for him to run anywhere? It is said that he did not distinguish between male and female—but he knew the

difference between home and forest? How is it that he did not study one word, but when he heard the *Bhāgavatam* verses, he could understand them, and then he came back and studied?

The same is with the story of Kṛṣṇa's lifting the Govardhana Hill. Now, try to imagine how He lifted it. Because to lift it, you have to go below it, and to go below it, you first have to lift it. So which happened first? And how did He hold it after lifting it? How is it that when He lifted it, it did not fall down, and that even during the heavy rain, the stones did not fall? Were the stones glued together? Although there was heavy rain, there was no mud. How is that?

Ultimately, the point is that there is a style of śāstra, which explains things, and that style has to be learned. These Vedic literatures are not to be studied the way Western people try to analyze and study them. There is the *sāhitya* system which you have to study first, and then you will know what these things imply. Basic knowledge of *sāhitya* is a prerequisite to understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the study has to be done in a genuine *paramparā*, otherwise it is like licking the honey bottle from the outside.

**QUESTION:** Let's say that one learns that style, at what point does one identify something as being part of the *sāhitya* style, and at what point does one identify it as being something which actually took place historically. Is that not personal decision?

**ANSWER:** If you know the *śailī* (the style used), then this doubt will not arise. *Śailī* means the style, process, or mechanics of explaining things or conveying a point. This is called literary license and poets use it all the time. You have to study this system and then you will understand.

Just as there is computer language, there is a poetic language. You have to study the language and then you will know what the terms mean. If somebody just knows plain English, then statements, such as, "a program has been aborted" won't make any sense to him. What does it mean, "aborted"?

In the Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavatam*, there is a description about the *gopīs*, but in the whole book there is no mention about their birth or how they grew up or even their names. Not even one name of any *gopī* or their parents or husbands is mentioned. This is the *sāhityika* style, because the author is not interested in giving their names, etc. That you can figure out from some other place. The author's interest, however, is to show the *bhava*, because that is the prominent thing.

Rāsa-līlā is supposed to be the explanation of the *gāyatrī-mantra*, but you try to figure out what *rāsa-līlā* has to do with *gāyatrī*. This is the *sāhityika* way of giving the meaning. Unless you know the *śailī*, you will not understand it. Everybody can relish the *Bhāgavatam* in his own manner. There are some historical facts in it; poetically it is lovely, and if you are interested in stories, then there are fantastic ones. But what the author wants to convey is what he has stated in the very beginning. For him other things are secondary.

Similarly, the story of Kṛṣṇa chastising the Kāliya snake—these descriptions cannot be explained historically. It is said, “Nanda Mahārāja had unlimited calves,” so where did they live? You have a few cows and it is such a big problem to manage. Nanda Mahārāja had nine lakh cows and so did Vṛṣabhānu. Everybody seemed to have nine lakh cows, and it was always nine lakh. They never grew. This is all *sāhityika* style. The number nine signifies something specific.

**QUESTION:** What are the principal *sāhityika śāstras*, which discuss these poetic conventions, so that one can read them and become familiar with this genre?

**ANSWER:** There are many. If you want to see in our Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, then we have *Alaṅkāra-kaustubha* by Kavikarṇapūra, *Kāvya-kaustubha* by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣa* by Jīva Gosvāmī. Mahārāja has printed them and given his comments on them. If you want to read outside the *sampradāya*, then you have *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, *Kāvya-prakāśa* and *Dhvanyaloka*, etc. There are numerous pieces of literature that one could consult.

**QUESTION:** What is to be learned from the story of Jaya and Vijaya?

**ANSWER:** There are a few points, which are taught by this story. One of the lessons that Bhagavān showed us in this story is that a *brāhmaṇa* should not be disrespected. If one disrespects a *brāhmaṇa*, then one undergoes suffering like Jaya and Vijaya.

Secondly, he showed how Brahman-realization is inferior to devotion, because Bhagavān ultimately favored His devotees and not the Four Kumāras. The Kumāras also realized this later on and prayed to become devotees, although they were *brahma-jñānīs*.

Bhagavān also wanted to taste *vīra rasa* (fighting), so for that reason He sent His devotees to become His adversaries, and then He came down, fought with them, and relished it. Nobody else is



qualified to fight with Him except His own associates. Sometimes His devotees play the role of adversaries.

Finally, He says in *Bhagavad-Gita* that He comes to establish religion whenever there is decline in religion, which is another point.

**QUESTION:** It was not that the service of Jaya and Vijaya was improper?

**ANSWER:** No. How can it be imperfect, when they are His associates? It was Bhagavān's own desire. He told them, "Do not fear; it is My plan. You go and you will come back to Me." If their service would have been imperfect, then they would have been disregarded.

**QUESTION:** What is the speciality of the story of Citraketu alias Vṛtrāsura?

**ANSWER:** This is to show the greatness of *uttama-bhakti* (pure devotion, as well as how the devotee of Bhagavān is fearless and fixed and does not waver under any circumstances. Whether he is in heaven or in hell, he is always fixed in his devotion to Bhagavān. It also shows the effect of offense.

**QUESTION:** What kind of devotional service did Vṛtrāsura do?

**ANSWER:** His mind was always fixed on the lotus feet of Bhagavān. He had no desire for anything else. He didn't desire the result of religious activities, wealth, power, sense gratification, or even liberation.

This story explains how a devotee is very much fixed in his goal and has no interest in anything other than devotion.

**QUESTION:** Is there also the significance of not doing guru and *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*, because Indra offended his guru two times; first Bṛhaspati and later on he killed even Viśvarūpa?

**ANSWER:** Yes. These people are all associates of Bhagavān, and through them Bhagavān teaches how we should avoid offenses. It does not affect them in any way, but through their enactment, a common person is given the teaching to avoid these offenses.

**QUESTION:** Did Citraketu practice *uttama-bhakti* or *vaidhī-bhakti*, because he worshipped Sankarṣaṇa?

**ANSWER:** Vaidhī is also *uttama-bhakti*, although generally we use the term *uttama-bhakti* for *rāgānugā*. The characteristic of *uttama-bhakti* is *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, not having any other desire, and this was shown in Citraketu's character. Especially when he was fighting as Vṛtrāsura with Indra, he recited some nice prayers exemplifying the behavior of an *uttamā-bhakta*. When he was cursed by Pārvatī, he was not interested in anything else except service to Bhagavān. Therefore, whether it is *vaidhī* or *rāgānugā*, Citraketu showed the quality of an *uttamā-bhakta*. He was not interested in anything else.

People want material progress or liberation. Both are possible only through *bhakti*, not otherwise. Devotees, however, do not want even that. They perform *bhakti* and do not want anything. It does not mean that they do not get anything, but they do not desire it. This was shown in Vṛtrāsura's character, that even under the most adverse circumstances, he did not desire anything other than service to Bhagavān's feet. He remained fixed in his remembrance of Bhagavān.

*Bhakti* means that you surrender yourself to Bhagavān and then act for His pleasure. You begin with cooperation, and then you will understand how you can do favorable action.

**QUESTION:** Bharata Mahārāja was born again as a deer because of his attachment to a deer in his previous life, but on the other side, it was his duty to protect the deer. How can one avoid reactions if one is fulfilling his duties?

**ANSWER:** He did not take birth again because he helped the deer, but because he was attached to it.

**QUESTION:** Yet, by serving the deer, he received the reaction.

**ANSWER:** This is not a reaction. It was his duty to protect the deer, but not to become attached. He gave up his worship, and that was not his duty. He protected the deer, but then he became very attached to it. He was attached to the point that nothing else but that deer seemed to have any importance for him. He was always thinking of the deer, taking care of it, etc., and because of that, he even forgot his worship of God. So he was born again. Whatever you think at the time of death, you take birth accordingly. Even at the time of death, he was remembering the deer.

However, this story shows how *bhakti* was not lost even in his deer form. When he took birth in a deer body, he was able to remember his past life.

**QUESTION:** Is it the duty of a *kṣatriya* to live as *rājarsi* in the forest like Mahārāja Bharata did?

**ANSWER:** That is *vānaprastha* in *varṇāśrama*-system. In *varṇāśrama* system a *kṣatriya* goes up to *vānaprastha*.

**QUESTION:** Was Bharata Mahārāja following all the nine processes of devotional service, like *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam* etc., or did he do some other things?

**ANSWER:** He practiced *arcanā bhakti*. The story gives us some teachings. Once you take to *bhakti*, you are not independent. If you develop an independent feeling or a separatist mentality, then you will fall down from *bhakti*. Even if he decided to take care of the deer, he should not have forgotten God and become completely absorbed in the deer. If you think yourself as different or independent, then that is the result you will get.

*Bhakti* means that you are not independent. It was wrong for Bharata to think, "I am protecting the deer because I am a *kṣatriya*." The main point is the consciousness. If the consciousness is independent, then the result is also independent. If his consciousness had remained on the path of *bhakti*, then this wouldn't have happened. Even if he took care of the deer, his attachment should have been primarily to God, Kṛṣṇa.

**QUESTION:** Was it because of his experience with the deer, that as Jaḍa Bharata, he was not attached to anything anymore?

**ANSWER:** As Jaḍa Bharata, he was just meditating on his worshipable Master. He was completely detached from the body. Therefore, he was not bothered about any name and fame. Even if people thought that he was stupid, still he did not bother. He had no interest in bodily things anymore, because he had undergone this experience with the deer when he was Bharata Mahārāja. Now he did not want to be attached to anybody. He just lived on what nature provided and internally was always in meditation. Therefore, he had no fear, even when the Kālī worshippers tried to kill him.

**QUESTION:** Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura makes the point that sometimes, for a specific purpose, the devotee is delayed in attaining Bhagavān, and it might take him two or three births, because he desires a specific relationship with Bhagavān, for which he has to undergo further progress. For this the example of Bharata Mahārāja was given, as he took three lifetimes, but for what destination was he aspiring?

ANSWER: Bharata Mahārāja desired *dāśya*, or to become an associate of Bhagavān as a servant. Therefore, he had to take one more birth, but such things do not happen in *uttama-bhakti*. This is only for those people who take to *bhakti* with a mixture of *jñāna*, *yoga*, or *karma*. These paths have some mixture with the *guṇas* and in the beginning they are not very clear about it. So later on, when they desire something specific, there is a delay. Then they have to take birth again.

Otherwise, on the path of *uttama-bhakti*, right from *śraddhā*, the person already has a relationship with Bhagavān and progresses from there. The only obstacles on this path are offenses. If one avoids them, then there is no more taking birth for any reason.

*Bhakti* was not very clearly understood by people, even in the olden times. It was always with a mixture of *karma* and *jñāna*. The general understanding was that you first follow *karma* and then you will come to *jñāna*. These may be mixed with *bhakti* because of the person's inclinations.

QUESTION: Is it a similar phenomenon like in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, where it describes different types of *bhāva*. It states that a devotee, depending on his association, will be inclined towards a particular relationship with Bhagavān, but this can change based on that association?

ANSWER: Yes. People like King Bharata had association that was not of *uttama-bhaktas*. This is why their interest developed that way.

QUESTION: What do stories, such as that of Dakṣa when he did not offer respect to Śiva and the cursing of Nārada Muni, mean? Of course, these are two different stories, but in both cases Dakṣa is involved and is not giving respect to great Vaiṣṇava.

ANSWER: The result is there in the story itself. He gets a goat head. If you do not give respect, this is what happens, because of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

QUESTION: Then why did Dakṣa do it a second time with Nārada Muni?

ANSWER: If somebody is not a devotee, he does not like devotees.

QUESTION: Even if he incurred such a drastic reaction like getting a goat's head?



ANSWER: This always happens in the material world. You find that people who are not devotees, do not like devotees. They do not regard their improper behavior toward devotees as offensive. It is only when you read the story that you analyze it. When something is happening in somebody's life, one does not analyze it that way.

The story shows how when somebody gets a post, he becomes proud, and because of pride he disrespects others. The story shows how pride brings destruction. Dakṣa was made *prajāpati*, therefore he became proud. Whenever you have pride, you disrespect others. When there is disrespect, then there is a fight. The result of a fight is that both parties suffer. Neither Śiva nor Dakṣa gained anything from their fight. Therefore, one should not behave like this. The story is meant to educate us. <sup>1</sup>

QUESTION: In the Ninth Canto, there is the story of Jamadagni, ordering Paraśurāma to kill his mother and brothers. This seems very drastic, so what is the lesson to be learned from this?

ANSWER: To show how to be obedient to your father.

QUESTION: To be obedient under all circumstances?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: To be practical, should we also obey it, if our father would tell us to kill someone?

ANSWER: That is what the story is teaching.

QUESTION: So it should be applied literally?

ANSWER: Now if you kill, you will go to jail. These days it is not as it was before. The idea is to be obedient. I do not think that your father is going to ask you such a thing. Nobody's father would do that. Sons are not ready to do even a little service, what to speak of killing someone.

QUESTION: Jamadagni told Paraśurāma to go on pilgrimage, and to do *prāyaścitta* for killing Kārtavīryārjuna, who was a *kṣatriya*. Why is this considered an offense, although Kārtavīryārjuna was stealing the *kāmadhenu* cow of Jamadagni, instead of protecting a *brāhmaṇa*? Also, in the case of King Veṇa, the sages who killed him did not do any *prāyaścitta*.

**ANSWER:** These are the principles of the *smṛti*. Kārtavīryārjuna was a king, and killing a king was sinful. *Smṛtis* are the codes of law.

**QUESTION:** Should the sages in the case of Veṇa, also have done *prāyaścitta*?

**ANSWER:** Veṇa was an atheist, so he was not qualified to be a king. Kārtavīryārjuna was not terrorizing others, as was Veṇa. He did not say, "Do not worship Viṣṇu, worship me." Kārtavīryārjuna did not act like that, but he acted wrongly only in the case of snatching the cow. Otherwise, he was a righteous king. Veṇa and Kārtavīryārjuna are not in the same category. Kārtavīryārjuna was a king who properly protected his subjects. He ruled correctly. The king is considered to be representative of Viṣṇu; therefore killing him is not considered proper. But Veṇa did not behave like a proper king. He was an atheist, and he forced everyone not to worship Viṣṇu. So Veṇa was not a representative of Viṣṇu anymore, because he was speaking against Viṣṇu. There was no sin involved in removing him.

It was improper to kill Kārtavīryārjuna, because when he was killed, irreligious people started troubling others. The dacoits started looting, and irreligion spread. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit was cursed, Śamīka Ṛṣi told the *brāhmaṇa* boy, "You haven't done the right thing by cursing him." Although Parīkṣit's act was wrong, a *brāhmaṇa* is also supposed to be tolerant, as his duty is to see after everybody's welfare. He should not think, "Because he has done something wrong to me, I will kill him." Then everybody had to suffer, because there was no replacement for Kārtavīryārjuna. It is better to tolerate one offense for the greater interest of humanity.

**QUESTION:** In the *Bhāgavatam*, there is the story of Hariścandra Mahārāja, who worshiped Varuṇa to get a son. Later on, when his son Rohita was to be offered in a sacrifice, Hariścandra Mahārāja brought another human to be sacrificed instead. What is the teaching of this story, and why is it in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*?

**ANSWER:** This story is depicting the character of a materialistic person. It shows how people in the material world behave, how they become attached to their sons, and what they do to protect this attachment. Although Hariścandra is famous for being truthful, even he was influenced by attachment. Although he did not refuse to offer the son, as he had promised, still he postponed it and even got a replacement. This illustrates the attachment of a materialistic person.

The story also shows that in those days some people were performing human sacrifices. This is also clear from the story of Jaḍa Bharata. Humans were offered in sacrifice to *tāmasika* deities.

QUESTION: Is this also part of Vedic culture that people in *tamo-guṇa* were offering human beings?

ANSWER: This was not Vedic but *tantric*.

QUESTION: What was the purpose of this human sacrifice?

ANSWER: They wanted to gain some material goal. The dacoits wanted to sacrifice Jaḍa Bharata, so that they could get *vidbhūti*, or power.

QUESTION: You say this is not Vedic but *tantric*?

ANSWER: Yes. Religion becomes degraded in due course of time and then misuse, deviations, and corruption appear. The original purpose of such sacrifice was to show the limit of renunciation. One was meant to sacrifice oneself. This was the idea, but when that is forgotten or misused, then you sacrifice others, thinking that a human sacrifice will please the deity.

QUESTION: Gajendra, in his former life as King Indradyumna, was cursed by Agastya Muni, because he did not receive him properly. Is this curse by Agastya to be considered as a *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is for cultured people, because the devotee relates with Kṛṣṇa, who is the most cultured and educated person. This story also teaches us how we have to behave in a cultured manner.

Indradyumna was sitting, and just because he was meditating, there was no reason for him not to give respect to an honorable and very special guest like Agastya Muni. He transgressed the code, therefore he was punished for that. Somebody had to correct him. This is to show that if you are performing worship and some special person comes, you cannot think, "I do not care for this person because I am doing my worship." This is how people generally think.

Even in your own house, if some person like a police officer comes, then you stop whatever you are doing and attend to that person. This is proper behavior, even when an ordinary person



comes to see you; then what to speak of when a personality like Agastya Muni comes.

The story is to teach that one cannot neglect to receive guests appropriately. The point is to explain this principle of giving respect and not about determining if Agastya was wrong or right. For example, since a king has the responsibility to chastise improper behavior, you cannot say that he is doing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, as that is his duty. In society, kings control people. Similarly, sages have some responsibility to correct people. Otherwise, who dares to tell anything to the king?

## 114. Study

**QUESTION:** Why is it that even in the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* the tradition of studying and teaching the Gosvāmī's books, which are the basis of the whole *sampradāya*, is practically lost? It is even difficult to find the books, what to speak of studying them.

**ANSWER:** It happens, because unqualified people are taking to that path. An unqualified person is interested in bodily maintenance. This is a path of high-class people, and if low-class people take to it, then they have no interest in scriptures or study. Their interest is in filling the belly.

Bhīṣma, for example, was asked, "Why are you supporting the Kauravas, who are on the wrong side?" He said, "Man is a servant of wealth and not vice-versa; because I have taken food from the Kauravas, therefore I have to be on their side." This shows that if a person is too attached to maintaining his body, then he cannot speak the truth. Such people will give prominence only to the body. This is the usual thing that happens.

In Buddhism, they have these three famous statements: *dharmam śaraṇam gacchāmi*; *buddham śaraṇam gacchāmi*; *saṅgham śaraṇam gacchāmi* ("I take shelter of *dharma*, I take shelter of Buddha, I take shelter of the society of other Buddhists"). To begin with, it is *dharma*—if people follow *dharma*, then things will remain proper. When *dharma* diminishes, then importance is given to some individual person. Forgetting *dharma*, the person is made more important. This is called personality cult. The next stage is that prominence is given to the group or society. When this happens, everything becomes hodge-podge. You do not know what is going on. *Dharma* is thrown into the basket. This is what has happened



to our *sampradāya* or any other *sampradāya*. When people are not interested, then who is going to protect the culture?

*Guror avajānā śruti-śāstra-nindanam*—first it begins with offenses to the guru, and then disregard for *śāstra*, and when there is disregard for *śāstra*, then *śāstra* is lost.

QUESTION: What was the method that was previously used for one to study *śāstra* from the guru?

ANSWER: The way they teach in college now. This was the way it was studied under the guru.

QUESTION: I was wondering how they could memorize all that, just by hearing it once and repeating it and then going on to the next subject.

ANSWER: The students used to have a relationship with the teacher. They had respect for the teacher, and lived and studied with him. They began with the alphabet, then grammar followed by knowledge of the dictionary<sup>9</sup>. First they had to master the language.

Then they would study philosophy and then a particular branch of the Vedas. Different people belonged to different branches of the Vedas, and the students would study that branch. Then, depending on to which *varṇa* they belonged to, they would study special subjects.

QUESTION: You said that they studied philosophy. Does that mean they studied the *ṣaḍ-darśanas*?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: They studied these *ṣaḍ-darśanas* before they studied the Vedas?

ANSWER: Yes. The students were not married, this is why it is called *brahmacārī-āśrama*. After the education was completed, they would leave the school and marry.

QUESTION: Did they also study devotional *śāstra* or just what was in the realm of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*?

<sup>9</sup> Sanskrit students had to memorize the dictionary also. In fact, there were many dictionaries, the most popular being *Amarakośa*. Some students would memorize a few dictionaries. These dictionaries are in the form of *ślokas* and are comparable to the modern day Thesaurus.

ANSWER: They did not study any Vaiṣṇava śāstra. It was all related to varṇāśrama-dharma. The gāyatrī was the main mantra.

QUESTION: How is it possible for us nowadays, especially people of the West, to study śāstra under the guru, if we do not even know Sanskrit?

ANSWER: Learn it.

QUESTION: My question is not that I do not want to learn it, but I just want to know if this is the way how it is done. So actually one should learn Sanskrit and study under his guru. Is this right?

ANSWER: If you want to study it, then you have to learn it. This is what I said; the first thing you study is the language, whether you are a Westerner or Indian. Indians also have to study Sanskrit. So the process is the same. Language is the first thing, and then you study philosophy. If you do not know the language, then how will you study?

QUESTION: Without learning Sanskrit and studying in this way, is it possible at all to advance or progress in spiritual life?

ANSWER: Advancement in devotion is not based on knowledge of Sanskrit or any other language. It is not dependent on any such thing, because bhakti is separate from varṇāśrama-dharma.

In bhakti, the main thing is śraddhā in the guru and śāstra. You surrender to the guru and follow the process. This is what is needed. Whether you get it by knowing Sanskrit or not knowing Sanskrit is immaterial. Everybody has the right to follow this path. It is not limited only to those who know Sanskrit or to those who are born in varṇāśrama, or only for men. There are many other processes, which are not available for women.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that every human being has the right to follow bhakti and the requirement for this is śraddhā. This is the beginning, and then you serve without any material motive by accepting the guru as your authority without having a separatist mentality. This is the qualification. If that can be understood by any medium or language, then this is all that is required.

It is not that when you know Sanskrit, then you become a devotee. There are so many people who know Sanskrit and who are not devotees. Therefore, the knowledge of Sanskrit or anything else, whether it is poetry (sāhitya), verse meter (chandas), or recitation

of *mantras*, is not related to *bhakti*, because *bhakti* is the process of worship (*upāsana*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We should worship and serve Him. The worship is not dependent on anything external, like knowledge of Sanskrita or *sāhitya*. It is dependent only on devotion.

If one's job, however, is to clarify the doubts of others, such as the job of the guru, then he has to have knowledge. A guru who does not have knowledge cannot remove the doubts of his disciples. He has to teach it. Therefore he has to know it. But as far as devotion is concerned, it is not necessary to know Sanskrit.

The qualification of the guru is described in the SB 11.3.21: *tasmā gurum prapadyeta*. It says that he has to be expert in *śabda-brahma*, or *śāstra*, but such is not described for the disciple (Gītā 4.34). The qualification for the disciple is that he has to have *śraddhā* and has to do service sincerely, without any hidden motive.

## 115. Suffering

QUESTION: We heard in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that there are two situations in which the devotees suffer: one is because of the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa and the other is due to offenses. How can a devotee recognize this?

ANSWER: A devotee does not think that Kṛṣṇa is giving him misery. He never thinks like that. The Pāṇḍavas, for example, underwent all kinds of suffering, but they never thought that it is Kṛṣṇa who is giving them this suffering.

First of all, a devotee is not under the influence of *karma*, because if he has surrendered, he is neither performing sins nor piety. But the *prārabdha-karma* remains, otherwise how will the body function? So he thinks, "It is all because of my *prārabdha-karma*, that I have to suffer."

*tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣāno  
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtām vipākam  
hṛd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te  
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

"A person who always sees Your full grace in all situations, enjoying the fruits of his own past deeds, and bowing down to You with his heart, speech, and body, becomes qualified to attain Your devotion." (SB 10.14.8)

A devotee continues living and thinks he is undergoing the reaction of his *karma*. He pays obeisances to Bhagavān and remembers Him. He does not think that God is giving him misery.

However, if one commits offenses, then that is a separate issue, because an offense will naturally manifest its reaction. A devotee does not think, "My misery is coming because Kṛṣṇa wants me to suffer."

*duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ  
sukheṣu vigata-sprhah  
vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ  
sthita-dhīr munir ucyate*

"One whose mind remains unperturbed in the midst of sorrows, who does not hanker after happiness, who is free of material attachment, fear, and anger, is a sage of stable wisdom." (Gītā 2.56)

Kṛṣṇa says that one should not become disturbed when miseries come, and one should not have the desire for happiness, but one should remain equanimous under all circumstances. Such a person is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. The idea is not to become absorbed in any of these material miseries and pleasures, but to continue doing one's service under all circumstances.

Sometimes, just to test us, it is said that Kṛṣṇa sends us all these miseries. But the real consciousness of a devotee is, "I am undergoing suffering for whatever I have done in the past." Otherwise, one may develop the wrong concept and blame Kṛṣṇa.

The devotee does not desire anything, and this is the meaning of *bhakti*, which is *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*. He neither desires to get any miseries nor desires to become happy. When that is the situation, then why should he bother about its cause? He continues with his own duties.

**QUESTION:** Since nothing can disturb that service mood, there is no point in trying to change one's *karma*, anyway.

**ANSWER:** When people are weak-minded, they have to be given some consolation and explanation. Then you talk in different ways. When you are steady in your service, you do not become disturbed. There is no need to think about these explanations. Whatever is happening, you continue doing your work regardless whether *karma* is destroyed or not.



## 116. Surrender

**QUESTION:** What can one do to develop the identity that "I am a servant of my guru?"

**ANSWER:** When you take *dīkṣā* and surrender yourself, you naturally have the ego that you are a servant of your guru and Kṛṣṇa. But you have to act sincerely.

It is a simple thing. For example, when you go to a company and take a job as a manager or a programmer, you do not say, "How am I going to develop the ego that I am a programmer?" You do not have to do anything extra. Or if you are running a shop, you do not think, "What do I have to do to consider myself as a shopkeeper." You just run a shop, and then you have the ego that you are a shopkeeper. It is not that you have to do something else to get this ego.

When you surrender at the time of *dīkṣā*, you have the ego that you are a servant. Otherwise, if people do not surrender, and they think it is some kind of ritual one has to go through, then their interest will be in material life. They will only progress materially and try to get material facilities. Generally, people who come to spiritual life use *bhakti* or *dīkṣā* only for material aggrandizement, but not for developing the ego that "I am a servant." Or they will just say it verbally, but do not have the ego, because they do not act accordingly.

So, when you surrender and act accordingly, after having taken that step of *dīkṣā*, then you will have the appropriate ego. The ego is self-manifest, so there is nothing else you have to do.

Many people take *dīkṣā*, and after that they do not want to have anything to do with the guru. They maintain their independence. They do not even like the guru. How do you expect that they will become free from *karma* or have this ego? They just take initiation because it is a social convention. When somebody asks you who is your guru, then at least you have something to say. But that is not the purpose of *dīkṣā*.

**QUESTION:** What if somebody cannot surrender?

**ANSWER:** What do you mean by that?

**QUESTION:** At certain times he is not following ...

**ANSWER:** You have to understand the meaning of surrender. Surrender means you feel that you are not independent. This is the main thing. If you keep thinking, "I am independent," then when you give money to the guru, you will also think, "I am a business man and my guru is poor, so let me give him some money." This is not surrender. Surrender means that one has the consciousness or ego, "I am not independent, but I am a servant of my guru." That is the ego that you have to have 24 hours.

You may have the ego, "I am so and so, I am father, mother, or sister," but these are material relationships. With the guru, you have to have a spiritual relationship, and this means that you know that you are his servant eternally, no matter where you go or what you do. When this ego is there, then the proper actions follow automatically. It is not that you decide, "OK, I surrender 50%."

**QUESTION:** What if one has to do other things for their job or family?

**ANSWER:** Do whatever you are doing. No one is stopping you from that. Suppose you are married and you think of yourself as a husband. You remain a husband when you are working in your business. It is not that when you are doing business, you are not a husband anymore. Whatever you are doing, you never forget that you are the husband of so and so. You do not give all your time to your wife or your children, nor do you spend all your money on them, but your ego remains that you are the husband of your wife, and the father of your children. You do not think of them all the time. You may not even give 50% of your time to them. With the guru it is the same thing, as it is a relationship. But you do not think that you will give so much time and then your work is finished because you have done your duty. This is an ever-present consciousness of "I am a servant." It is not a deal in which you give 50% or so of your time.

When a traditional Indian girl marries a boy, her ego changes to "I am a wife and he is my husband." She always has that ego even if the husband dies, unless she remarries. [In India, in the past there was no remarriage.] And this ego is just based on the material body. It is not a spiritual relation. She accepts the husband and gives up her family, parents, brothers, sisters, village, place of birth, and everything else. She moves in with the husband and also changes her name. These all are material designations, but still she develops the ego, "I am the wife of so and so." Why is that not possible with guru? The wife does not think, "I am a 50% wife, or 50% married."

Right from the moment she marries, she changes her ego. Once the woman is married, all the duties of a wife immediately are hers. After that she may go to her father's house, but there she cannot say, "Well, I am at my father's place, so here I am not married and so and so is not my husband." Wherever she is, she continues to be a wife. She considers her husband's house as her house and her father's house is no longer her house. If there is a quarrel between her father and her husband, then she will side with the husband.

The same happens with the guru. Even if you are unable to see him, that does not mean that you are not a disciple or that you are only 50% or 90% surrendered. You are 100% surrendered and you always act accordingly.

**QUESTION:** Is it true that the more we are aware of our guru, no matter what we may be doing, the more love we will develop for him?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is a matter of consciousness. Once you have this feeling, then there is no support for *karma* or anything. *Karma* cannot hang anywhere. *Karma* is generated when you think that you are independent. When your *ahamkāra* is, "I am servant of my guru and he is my eternal master," then you can do whatever you are doing. It is not that you are not going to live in the material world, or you are not going to deal practically with people, or you are not going to engage in business. You do all these, but the consciousness, "I am a servant of my guru," remains all the time.

**QUESTION:** To understand the concept of *śaraṇāgati* (surrender) on an intellectual level is one thing, but how do you implement that on a practical level? How does one transform the understanding of surrender into action?

**ANSWER:** If you can understand it, then you will naturally implement it on practical level. Once you have a mental understanding and proper concept, then the proper actions will naturally follow, because actions follow from your understanding. When you have faith in what you understand, then you accept and act on that. If you understand and accept that *śaraṇāgati* is related to acting favorably and not acting unfavorably, then you will do the right thing. All you have to do is that which is favorable and avoid that which is unfavorable.

**QUESTION:** How can one make a firm resolution? What should happen in one's heart so that one comes to this firm conviction, because in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* it is mentioned that one needs to have *laulyam* (the strong desire to have genuine conviction).



ANSWER: This determination comes by the will of Bhagavān, as He is the one who gives the inspiration. When He wants to accept somebody, then He gives a feeling or firm conviction in the person's mind, and then such a person naturally acts favorably and gives up all other desires.

In the material world, one's resolve comes on account of one's previous *saṁskāras* and the nature that one has acquired. This gives one various desires and the strength to fulfill those desires. But the inclination towards *bhakti* is not material, because *bhakti* is not material. As *bhakti* comes from Bhagavān, the desire for it also comes from Bhagavān. The inspiration to take *dīkṣā* also comes from Bhagavān.

QUESTION: Is the *sādhana* given by guru, and is it something individual or the same for everyone?

ANSWER: It is common for all, as it is performed under the guidance of the guru, in which the first step is that one surrenders completely. Then there are aspects of *sādhana* such as hearing, chanting, remembering, worshipping, paying obeisances, etc. According to a person's own taste, interest, and faith, he takes to one particular limb of *bhakti*. That depends on the individual's own liking, because this path is also based on one's interest. It is not that you are given a set of rules to follow. The rule is just one, surrender yourself. After that, you work according to your interest.

In *bhakti*, *sādhana* and *sādhya* are not different. The process is service and the result is also service. The only difference is in one's consciousness. In the beginning, one may not have attachment, *mamatva*, but in the end one attains attachment to Bhagavān. This is the only difference. You will continue performing the same activity and your attachment will increase.

In the other processes, there is a difference between *sādhana* and *sādhya*. For example, when you want to travel somewhere, you may use a car. The car can be compared to *sādhana*, for it is the vehicle, and the destination is the *sādhya*. Once you reach the *sādhya*, you do not need the *sādhana*, but in *bhakti*, *sādhana* and *sādhya* are the same, i.e., *bhakti*. The difference is only in the quality of one's consciousness. So one begins with *śraddhā*, which means trust or faith in the words of Bhagavān and the guru, and based on that one progresses.

In other processes, there is a difference between the process and the end result. This idea is also preached in the so-called paths



of devotion. They say that if you perform devotion, then you will achieve liberation. But in *uttama-bhakti*, there is no such difference between the process and the goal. You perform service and you get service as a result of it.

**QUESTION:** What is surrender? Is it a process or something that happens in my heart?

**ANSWER:** It is the consciousness, and it manifests as a feeling and also in one's activities.

**QUESTION:** Would you give me a more specific meaning of surrender? Do I have to surrender my whole life or my whole existence or...?

**ANSWER:** You have to surrender yourself. Surrender is basically in consciousness, so you must have the consciousness, "I will act favorably, and not act unfavorably." This is the gist of surrender. Once you have this consciousness, then all your activities are guided by this principle. In the beginning, you do it on the basis of knowledge and understanding, and in the perfected stage it is natural, because you have developed love. The basic feature of love is that you want to please the object of love. All other activities will follow naturally and be performed with the pure desire to please one's beloved.

On other paths, the person keeps himself independent, and he performs activity in order to achieve a certain result. But in *bhakti*, because you have surrendered yourself, you do not receive *karma*. You no longer think of yourself as independent, but as a servant. The reaction has to hang on something. It is like having a garment that needs to be hung on a peg. But if there is no peg, it cannot be hung. In *uttama-bhakti*, the ego "I am independent," which is the very basis of *karma*, is destroyed. For this reason it is said that in *bhakti* a person is immediately liberated. If he is surrendered, then he cannot get any *karma* of the past, present, or future. He is no longer an independent person, but instead he considers himself to be a servant of Bhagavān and guru. This is how *bhakti* begins, and it continues like this, except that later on, it becomes your natural attitude.

This surrender is a stable permanent characteristic, because it is not a manifestation of the material *guṇas*. It is *viśuddha-sattva* (the internal potency of Bhagavān). Surrender becomes more and more intense.

**QUESTION:** What are the symptoms of surrender, and what are the changes that happen to a person who is surrendered?

**ANSWER:** The symptoms of surrender are that you like to do favorable service and you avoid doing anything that is unfavorable. You like to cooperate and give your support, and you do not have any dislike for the guru or his words. A surrendered person does not have any ideas that are separate from the guru's ideas. He will not harbor motives that are different from the motives of the guru, nor will he do something that is for his or her own benefit, which has nothing to do with *bhakti* and the wishes of the guru.

**QUESTION:** This surrender is theoretically in one second, but practically can it be a gradual process?

**ANSWER:** It can happen gradually. But it can also happen in an instant. *Uttama-bhakti* does not come by preaching or convincing somebody. It comes by the mercy of Bhagavān and guru. So once you make the resolve, there are no more fluctuations within the mind and it always grows.

These fluctuations are on the other paths that deal with the *guṇas*. In the processes of *yoga*, *jñāna*, or *karma-mārga*, because the person remains independent, some sort of spiritual practices are given. But these do not solve the basic problem. They do some gymnastics, some exercises, and different types of practices, but there is nothing attained ultimately.

*Uttama-bhakti* is the only process that is simple and straightforward, and it removes the problem right at the root, because it is based on favorable service to Bhagavān. Once a person takes a vow and follows the instructions of the guru, he is on the right path. This happens only by the grace of Bhagavān. It does not come by deliberation, or because someone preached to you. Therefore, no reason can be given as to why somebody likes *uttama-bhakti*, because it is not based on anything material. It is causeless. Why does someone like to do service? There is no reason for it, because if there is a reason, then it means it has a material cause.

People in the material world, who are ignorant, have attachment to sense pleasures. No one has to preach to them that they should seek material pleasures. They haven't done any special *sādhana* nor did they need to have someone convince them that they needed to develop attachment for sense pleasures. It just happens that way. *Uttama-bhakti* is something like that. It is not based on any

deliberation or practice. Just as people like material enjoyment, in the same way devotees like devotional service.

QUESTION: I feel as if I make this resolution again and again. Obviously it is not a resolution if I have to keep making it. I feel I have to try to also mean it.

ANSWER: This is not the kind of resolution which can be picked up and put down.

QUESTION: What if somebody surrenders partially and not fully? Does he get the same benefit?

ANSWER: There is no partial surrender.

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QUESTION: Could you explain more about these nine types of devotional service?

ANSWER: These nine processes of devotion, which are described in SB 7.5.23-24, such as hearing, chanting, remembering, and so on, are performed after surrendering. Out of these nine, *ātmā-nivedanam* (surrender of one's self), is the *aṅgī*, or the whole, and the others are parts of it. That means surrender is the chief activity. Once that is done, then the other limbs or parts of *bhakti* will follow.

Without *ātmā-nivedanam*, the other things are not considered as *bhakti*. First one has to take shelter of the guru and surrender, and then one engages in service. Although *ātmā-nivedanam* is one type of devotional service, it is also the major or the common feature in all of them, whether it be *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, or any of the other eight parts.

QUESTION: What is the difference between *ātmā-nivedanam* and *śaraṇāgati*?

ANSWER: There is no difference. *Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpah prātikūlyasya varjanam* (CC Madhya 22.100) is the path of *śaraṇāgati* and this means to act favorably and not act unfavorably.

QUESTION: Does the relationship with the guru last through many lives? Is it eternal? Does the guru come back if the disciple takes birth again?

ANSWER: If you accept a guru, then there is no more birth.

QUESTION: There is no more birth provided that you fully surrender.

ANSWER: Obviously. If you do not fully surrender and accept a guru, then there is no relationship.

QUESTION: But what if someone really intends to surrender, but some *samśkāras* are interfering with his surrender? Can it take a while to surrender or does it have to be an instant thing?

ANSWER: Yes, it is an instant thing. For anyone who takes *dikṣā* in the true sense, there is no more birth for him.

QUESTION: Then anything else is not *dikṣā*: If it is 99.1 % of surrender, is that not considered to be *dikṣā*?

ANSWER: Whether it is 1%, 50%, or 99%—it is all the same.

QUESTION: But was it not Rūpa Gosvāmī, who gave the example of *prārabdha karma* (the result of past deeds in the present life)?

ANSWER: This is a separate thing. This means that he is surrendered, so he is not going to take birth again. That is what *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* says: All his *karma* is finished, *kūṭa*, *bija*, *prārabdha*, and *aprārabdha*.

QUESTION: So it is *dikṣā* only when there is 100% surrender, and anything else is just a farce. But still you give *dikṣā* to everybody who asks—just to help them to get free train tickets?

ANSWER: Yes, I offer a social service for them.

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QUESTION: In the name of surrender, sometimes devotees become fanatic and irresponsible. Like on one occasion, there were some women who left their children and came to the class. Their philosophy was, "If we perform *bhakti*, then Kṛṣṇa will look after the kids." A person may throw away his passport, thinking, "I am surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa will care about me." Also Yogānanda neglected his studies, thinking, "Anyway, I am following the path of God, which is first." Could you comment on this logic?



ANSWER: This type of surrender is material. It is not based on knowledge. Real surrender is based on knowledge, especially understanding the difference between the body and the self. *Śaraṇāgati* is for a transcendental purpose, so it is based on scriptural understanding. Surrender isn't anything a person does because it is convenient or because they want to get the support of others. It isn't done because it is a social convention or tradition. Real *śaraṇāgati* is not because it gratifies your pride or gives you certain facilities; that is not the purpose of *śaraṇāgati*, or surrender. Surrender is based on knowledge and its purpose is service to Bhagavān. You have to give up the pride of material passion.

Most people who follow the path of *bhakti* do not have a true understanding. They are not really surrendered nor do they know much about it. It is just fanaticism because it is based on ignorance.

QUESTION: What about if there is a class but at the same time one has a material responsibility, such as putting the children to sleep? What should they do?

ANSWER: You have to be responsible. For example, suppose you have a stomach pain. Will you take care of your stomach pain or will you go to hear the *kathā*? You should first take care of your pain; otherwise, if you go to *kathā*, you will not be able to hear it. In the same way, if you have a responsibility to take care of another person, then you have to do that also. If not, you are being very cruel. *Bhāgavata-kathā* is not teaching us to become cruel. The qualification of a devotee, which is described in the *Bhāgavatam*, is that he is *nirmatsara-sat*, meaning that he is not envious. He is able to tolerate another person's progress, and he is compassionate.

You have to be *sarva-bhūta-hitāḥ sadā* (SB 3.22.38), and take care of other's welfare. Bhagavān is also present in everyone else. It is not that you neglect taking care of others just because you want to hear *kathā*. It is not proper to think like that. For example, when it is time to do service to the guru, the disciple says: "O Gurudeva, I am chanting my rounds, so I am not available now." But when it is time for eating, then he is the first to come. This is not truthfulness. *Bhakti* is the path of truthfulness and compassion, and not of duality, cheating, and selfishness.

QUESTION: What if there is a class at 9 pm and you have to put your child to sleep?

ANSWER: So then you do it.

QUESTION: You have to totally sacrifice the whole?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: That sounds as if material life is more important than the spiritual life?

ANSWER: There is no division like material life and spiritual life. It is all spiritual, if you have surrendered to Bhagavān. Then putting the child to bed is also considered to be service. Not that you make a distinction that this is spiritual and this is material.

QUESTION: So the responsibility is first.

ANSWER: It is all spiritual responsibility.

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QUESTION: In *Bhakti Sandarbha* we heard about the pure type of *svarūpa-siddha bhakti*, and you gave the example of the *gopīs*, and how they serve Kṛṣṇa without any demand even though He is not maintaining them. On the other side, it is counted amongst the six symptoms of *śaraṇāgati* that Kṛṣṇa is the maintainer and protector of the devotee. How to understand that Kṛṣṇa is the maintainer and protector, but He did not maintain the *gopīs*?

ANSWER: The *gopīs* also felt that Kṛṣṇa is their maintainer. Whenever a problem presented itself, they asked Kṛṣṇa for help.

The *gopīs* are not *sādhana-siddhas*, they are *nitya-siddhas* (eternal associates). They were not following any *sādhana*. *Śaraṇāgati* is a path. The *gopīs* are the ideals, but they did not undergo the process of taking *dīkṣā* from a guru, studying scriptures, etc. They have a natural, causeless attachment to Kṛṣṇa. They are His *svarūpa-śakti*.

*Śaraṇāgati* is a process to show how to reach there. Nobody can even understand that the *gopīs* are devotees, because they appear to be householders. They are taking care of the daily duties of family life. There is no *sat-saṅga*, or holy association for them. Previously, it was not even allowed for women to go out and meet someone, as they met Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, even great learned people could not understand that the *gopīs* are devotees.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu has shown us the path, so that we can follow it. And the beginning is *śaraṇāgati*:

ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ  
 prātikūlyasya varjanam  
 rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso  
 gopīrṭve varaṇam tathā  
 ātma-nikṣepa -kārpanye  
 ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatih

“Surrender has six divisions:

- 1) To resolve to act favorably towards Bhagavān.
- 2) To give up what is unfavorable toward Bhagavān.
- 3) To have faith that Bhagavān will give protection.
- 4) To accept Bhagavān as one's protector.
- 5) To surrender oneself.
- 6) To be humble.”

(CC Madhya 22.100)

If one can do just this much, then everything else will follow. Just selecting Kṛṣṇa as your protector is not something very great, because by doing that, you just become dependent on Him and don't do any service. This is just a beginning step, but not something that is very elevated. It remains concealed in higher types of devotion. Some people may follow only this much and just depend on Kṛṣṇa and not do any service. These people have a neutral relation or no relation to Kṛṣṇa. But this is not the highest type of *bhakti*.

This also exists in high-class devotees, but it is not the only thing, for they have something more. In case of the *gopīs*, everything was for the sake of Kṛṣṇa. They were so surrendered that they did not even bother about their own prestige or *kula-dharma*. No one can surrender like this. They are not a burden to Kṛṣṇa. But they also took shelter of Kṛṣṇa in emergency. When Indra sent the rain, everybody took shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa protected them. One cannot attain such a stage just by changing one's clothes [i.e., wearing devotee dress]. One has to begin with *śaraṇāgati* and at least be truthful. People are not even truthful. They take *dikṣā* and then not even follow the meaning of *dikṣā*.

**QUESTION:** There are Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in Navadvīpa who propagate the idea that Caitanya Mahāprabhu tasted *nāgarī-bhāva* with the *nāgarīs* (girls) of Navadvīpa. They support this by the writings of Locana dāsa Ṭhākura and Kavikarṇapūra and many others. So how are we to understand this?



ANSWER: This *nāgarī-bhāva* is the feeling of devotion. The example of a chaste woman is given to explain this *bhāva*, because *nāgarī-bhāva* deals with women. A chaste woman is devoted to her husband and never thinks of associating with any other person in her life, not even in her dreams. In fact, the example of a chaste woman is given to describe how a *sādhu*, or a saintly person, should behave, because a chaste woman never thinks of any other person. A devotee is devoted to Bhagavān in the same manner. A traditional Indian girl is born into her parent's family, but when she gets married, she gives up her parent's family and goes to the husband's family and accepts the husband's family as her own family and surrenders completely. She lives there according to their family rules and regulations not carrying anything from her past, like name, etc. This is an example of complete surrender. When somebody becomes a devotee, he is expected to surrender like that. The woman does not think of anyone else and does favorable service to the husband and the relatives of the husband. Traditionally, this is how women were in India. They will do service, feed everybody, and always eat last. In joint families women would never eat first. When everybody had eaten, only then would she eat. Whatever was left over, they would eat that happily and feel content. This is exactly what devotion is: doing favorable service to the guru and not thinking of one's own welfare.

Another example is that of a woman who becomes a mother. She becomes naturally very soft because she has to take care of her child. She serves the child in the same selfless manner as a disciple is supposed to serve the guru. These qualities of surrender and service are there in women. Only women do service. Woman means not just the body, but the mood she naturally has. Her mind was designed like that, to serve the husband and the children. Previously, sex was not prominent in marriage. Marriage was concluded to beget a child that would continue the lineage and perform service to the forefathers or to Bhagavān. The wife is called *jāyā*, which actually means mother. Because a man is born first from the mother and then he produces a son from his wife. It is as if he is taking birth again, because the son is considered as one's own self, *ātmā vai jāyate putrah*. That is the purpose of having sex.

According to the *rasa-śāstra*, those who are *samājika* or *sahṛdaya*, or people who are in *sattva-guṇa* and learned, enjoy only the loving relationship with a woman but not physical sex. According to *rasa-śāstra*, physical sex is not considered as enjoyable as a loving relationship.



In this way, it is actually the *bhāva* of a woman that is given as an example. When it is said *nāgarī-bhāva*, *mañjarī-bhāva*, or *sakhī-bhāva*, it is this *bhāva* or dedication—complete surrender, service, selfless nature, loving service, which is implied and not the bodily structure.

But now the whole thing is that there is no difference between male and female and everything is just for sex. And people are not interested in relations, such as husband, wife, children, etc., but only in gross things. This is why these examples do not make sense any more.

**QUESTION:** When the *ācāryas* like Locana dāsa Ṭhākura were writing these kinds of scriptures they were expressing this kind of full surrender in this *bhāva*?

**ANSWER:** Yes, they are talking about the *bhāva* and then this example is given. *Bhāva* is a subtle thing. To make it understandable, you have to give an example. The closest example is the mood of a chaste wife. If the husband died, she would burn herself on the pyre of the husband. It was not that this was a ritual that she had to do. It was because she had so much love and affection that she could not live without him. She was so surrendered that she did not think that she had a separate existence. Her heart and her whole existence was one with the husband. Therefore, she was considered as a half of the body of the husband. When the husband died, she just couldn't live without him, so she voluntarily burned herself. That example is given in *bhakti*. This is why it is called *bhāva*. But now that example does not exist any more. Therefore, people have great difficulty in grasping the meaning of surrender and *bhakti*.

## 117. Tadiya

**QUESTION:** How far does the definition of *tadiya* (that which is connected to Kṛṣṇa) go in relation to doing service to *tadiya*? Is it only the flute, or does this also include all other paraphernalia, such as His abode, etc.? And is it conscious?

**ANSWER:** Service is done not only to Kṛṣṇa but also to things and people belonging to Him, *tadīyānām*. Predominantly, *tadīyānām* means the devotees, especially the guru. Otherwise, it is everything that belongs to Kṛṣṇa, including His dress, flute, garland, abode, and other objects. The gradation is according to the consciousness of the objects.

QUESTION: Then *tadīyānām* means first the devotees, and then the paraphernalia?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Does this practically mean that all *tadīya* are conscious?

ANSWER: Yes, everything that belongs to Kṛṣṇa, including His abode, is conscious. Bhagavān's name, the *mantra*, His ornaments, and everything else related to Him is conscious. Although they appear as if they are different from Bhagavān, they are not, because they are related to Him as His energy. All this is one *tattva* and there is no difference.

QUESTION: Can one make *aparādha* against *tadīya*? Are there also gradations?

ANSWER: Yes, for example crossing over Bhagavān's garland is an offense. As they are worshipable, you can also disrespect them. We have to show respect to all that is related to Bhagavān. Otherwise, it is an offense.

## 118. Temple

QUESTION: When should the bells in the temple room be rung?

ANSWER: The bells are rung just before the temple gates are opened.

## 119. Tests, Problems

QUESTION: Why are there tests and obstacles in *bhakti-mārga*?

ANSWER: Obstacles are necessary for us to become more determined and enthusiastic. For example, if mother Yaśodā had not made an effort, she wouldn't have received Kṛṣṇa's mercy to bind Him. *Bhakti* is consciousness. *Bhakti* on the level of *śraddhā* means firm determination. Therefore, one can overcome every obstacle, no matter how difficult it may be. When obstacles come, the devotee becomes more alert, determined, and surrendered. Thus he makes more progress.

**QUESTION:** When a devotee encounters a dangerous situation, should he see that this has come because of Kṛṣṇa's arrangement or because of his *karma*?

**ANSWER:** Problems come to a devotee to make him firm and also to show to non-devotees that *bhakti* is a difficult path, so that unqualified people do not enter and spoil it.

Even great devotees like Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja had to undergo a lot of trouble. In comparison to their troubles, what we face is nothing. They were uprooted from their kingdom, had to wander in the forest, and were attacked by demons and the Kauravas. Sometimes even Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja used to become very dejected, thinking, "What misdeeds have I done that I have to undergo this type of problem?" Then sages like Nārada would come and console him by saying, "The problems which you are facing are nothing. Look at Prahlāda and all the problems that this little boy had to face." Through problems Kṛṣṇa makes one's faith stronger.

Otherwise, the Name is supposed to be most auspicious. And it is said that wherever the Name is chanted, there is no inauspiciousness. But Kṛṣṇa was personally living with the *vraja-vāsīs* and yet, all the problems came to them. This cannot be the result of their *karma*. It is only Bhagavān's arrangement because He wants His devotees to become very strong. Simultaneously He shows how devotees take all these troubles and still continue with service. He also wants to make sure that unqualified people do not take to this path. For this reason He arranges troubles for his devotees.

Nārada consoled the Pāṇḍavas by saying, "Kṛṣṇa is living directly with you all. In other *avatāras* He came, helped the devotees, and went away. So many problems came to Prahlāda, but Nṛsimhadeva did not stay with him. He killed Hiranyakaśipu and then He went away. Or the elephant Gajendra was liberated by Viṣṇu from the alligator and then He left. But Kṛṣṇa is always with you, so you are very fortunate. There is nobody as fortunate as you." This would give them more strength to continue. This is how devotees are protected.

**QUESTION:** Definitely the devotee should see the difficulties that are coming to him as sent by Kṛṣṇa.

**ANSWER:** They are coming by His arrangement. It is not that He wants to trouble you, but you should think that this challenge is for your benefit. A devotee is a different species; he is a different type of person. His style is different from others because he does not

want anything from Bhagavān. He surrenders himself and whatever belongs to him, belongs to Bhagavān. How would a devotee ask anything from Bhagavān? The devotee loves Bhagavān. And you do not ask anything from the person whom you love—you want to give him; you want to serve. Otherwise, this will go against the path of pure love, which is devoid of other desires, *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*.

It is difficult for people who are afraid of problems, unnatural situations, or calamities, to understand Kuntī's prayer to Kṛṣṇa, "Please give me more calamities." The Pāṇḍavas faced so many troubles in their life. One would expect them to think, "At least now let me live in peaceful circumstances." But Kuntī was asking Kṛṣṇa to give her more problems. This is unimaginable that someone will ask for trouble.

Devotees do not think like common persons. Mahāprabhu also prayed, "Whether Kṛṣṇa embraces me or tramples me, He is my master, life after life." The devotees say that He is our God, He is our master, and we serve Him under all circumstances.

For example, Mahārāja's guru had paralysis for twelve years in the last part of his life. Mahārāja asked him if he could do some *anuṣṭhāna* (spiritual practice) according to the *smṛti-śāstra*. In the *smṛti*, it is described that you get a disease like this because of a certain action that you have done in the past. There, the solution is that you chant certain *mantras* or give in charity or appease the nine planets. But *param-gurudeva* refused by saying, "I will undergo my *karma*, and the *grahās* (planets) are not the cause of my suffering. They are only indicating that something has been done in the past. Therefore, the result is coming." He did not want that anything of that type should be done to relieve him from the paralysis.

A devotee has this understanding:

*tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣāno  
bhujāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam  
hrd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te  
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

"A person who always sees Your full grace in all situations, enjoying the fruits of his own past deeds, and bowing down to You with his heart, speech, and body, becomes qualified to attain Your devotion." (SB 10.14.8)



He will undergo the reactions to his *karma* while always remembering Kṛṣṇa. And only such a person becomes qualified to inherit the property of Bhagavān, because he does not want anything.

And sometimes, when it is said that Bhagavān protected somebody or gave some material boon, it is for those people who haven't yet developed *śraddhā* on this path. These statements are for them to develop *śraddhā*, to make them interested in *bhakti*.

Therefore, a devotee's mind is difficult to understand, because he has a different type of thinking. His thinking and his psychology are completely different from that of a normal person. A normal person cannot understand a devotee because his calculations and the devotee's calculations are completely different. One is absorbed in his body and possessions, and the other is working for Bhagavān.

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**QUESTION:** We have heard many stories about the guru testing the disciple and his sincerity. Does this happen on our path and how?

**ANSWER:** Before giving *dīkṣā*, the guru is supposed to test the disciple as to whether or not he is qualified. The general instruction in *śāstra* is that a guru should observe the prospective disciple for one year. If that is not possible, then at least he should observe him for six months, if that is not possible, then for one month, and so on. The idea is to see that he is qualified, so that the process is not misused and corrupted by unqualified people.

**QUESTION:** But after *dīkṣā*, does the guru test the disciple to see if he can follow this or that?

**ANSWER:** There is no testing like this after *dīkṣā*; the testing is done before. There are no more exams after *dīkṣā*.

**QUESTION:** Then we can presume that we have been through this testing.

**ANSWER:** This is a spiritual path, and the test here is that you do what you say. This is what the guru sees—whether you are able to do this or not. There is no other exam or test. The test is that you say something and you do it. This includes every test.

Your life will transform only if you are truthful, which means you follow the order of the guru. Otherwise, you will remain what you are, no matter what you do. Therefore, this is the only test. If one passes it, then this will change one's life. But those who continue living as before remain non-devotees.

[See also: Suffering]

## 120. Tilaka

**QUESTION:** I heard from some devotees that the Rādhā Kuṇḍa tilaka that we buy at Loi Bazar is not really from there. Sometimes they use some other earth. What should we do?

**ANSWER:** This is the age of adulteration, and there is nothing you can do about it. Either you go to Rādhā Kuṇḍa and get the tilaka there or you use the one that you bought. Whatever it is, take it as real.

## 121. Truthfulness

**QUESTION:** What is truthfulness (*satya*)?

**ANSWER:** The word *satya* has so many meanings. The ultimate meaning of *satya* is Kṛṣṇa. As the *Bhāgavatam* says: *satyaṁ param dhimahi*, "We meditate on the Absolute Truth." (SB 1.1.1)

*satye pratiṣṭhitāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ satyamatra prtiṣṭhitāḥ  
satyāt satyaṁ ca govindas tasmāt satyaḥ hi nāmataḥ*

"Kṛṣṇa is situated in truth and truth exists in Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the essence of truth. Therefore, He is called *satya* (Truth) by name." (Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva 70.13)

Kṛṣṇa is situated in *satya*, He is *satya*, since Truth is coming from Him. Therefore, His name is *satya*. *Satya* is a name of Kṛṣṇa. The *Bhāgavatam* uses that name in the very first verse. When the word *satya* is used like this, it is in the absolute sense. But in a practical sense, the word *satya* is used in so many places. In the Upaniṣads it is said, *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahman*: Absolute Reality is *satya* (truth), knowledge, and unlimited. The impersonalists also talk about *satya*, but for them everything is *mithyā*, false. What can be

*satya* for them, since *satya* is that which exists in the past, present, and future?

Then those who use the *yoga-sūtra* talk about *yama* and *niyama*: *ahimsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahaḥ yamaḥ* (The *yamas* are: Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-possessiveness). They have their definition of *satya*.

From the practical point of view, *satya* means: *yathārtha bhāṣaṇam*—to speak the truth. You say what is in your mind and not anything else. Or, if you have given your word to a person, then you keep that word. Bali Mahārāja, for example, gave his word to Vāmana when he said that he would give Him three steps of land. So he kept his word. This was truthfulness. But at the same time, Śukrācārya was preaching to Bali Mahārāja by saying, “This is not *satya*,” because at certain occasions telling a lie is also considered as truth. For example, in the case of marriage or protecting one’s job, you cannot just lose everything because of your word. You might need to break your promise or do something else, if there is the danger of losing everything. *Niti*, polity, also talks like that.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja was a man of truth, but Kṛṣṇa made him speak something that people said was untruthful. Then Kṛṣṇa gave a whole lecture on what actually truth is. Sometimes, what is considered as truthful may be untruthful.

But from the *vyāvahārika* (practical) point of view, *satya* means *yathārtha bhāṣaṇam* (speaking what you know to be right). Not that you construct something in your mind and hoodwink another person.

There are principles of *dharma* that are also *satya*, but they are very complicated. In different situations different things may take on different meanings. Kṛṣṇa told Yudhiṣṭhira that he should say, *aśvatthāmā hataḥ*. Instead of saying that, Yudhiṣṭhira said, *aśvatthāmā hataḥ narovā gajovā*, which literally means, “*Aśvatthāmā* is dead, man or elephant.” Because of this statement, Yudhiṣṭhira had to go to hell.

**QUESTION:** Vaiṣṇavas speak what is in their mind, but in the material world, there is always covering up and putting on a mask. If I always speak what is in my mind, it is not such a good thing.

**ANSWER:** It does not mean that you speak your mind all the time. The idea is when you speak, you want it to be congruent with what you are thinking, but you need not speak your every thought.

Your mind is always thinking. You would not have the time to speak every thought that comes in your mind.

\*

**QUESTION:** *Uttama-bhakti* is the path of truthfulness, but in Kaliyuga truthfulness is the last leg of religion. Is truthfulness also declining? Could you speak about this?

**ANSWER:** In Kaliyuga, there is no qualification for any other path but *bhakti*. If you want to follow *varṇāśrama-dharma*, or *jñāna-mārga*, or anything of these, then at least you have to be born in the *varṇāśrama* system, which means right from the beginning, there should be proper *samśkāras*, starting with *garbhādhāna-samśkāra*.

However, all these *samśkāras* do not exist anymore. Therefore *bhakti* is the only process, because anybody who has a human body is qualified to engage in it.

*śruto 'nupaṭhito dhyāta  
ādrto vānumoditaḥ  
sadyaḥ punāti sad-dharmo  
deva-viśva-druho 'pi hi*

“This path of devotion immediately purifies even those persons who are hostile to the *devas* or even to all creatures, if they hear, read, meditate upon it, or even if they approve when it is practiced by others.” (SB 11.2.12)

By hearing, studying, and thinking of devotion, and even by supporting or appreciating someone who is performing devotional service, one becomes purified. There is no other path like this.

If one understands that, then there is no problem in being truthful; it is the easiest thing. Actually being truthful is easier than being a liar. If you are lying, then you have to remember what you said, so that you do not contradict yourself. If you forget what you have said, then you say something different next time. If you want to remain truthful, then there is no problem. There is no anxiety about it and no planning is needed. You can just be normal. If you do not follow the truth, then everything is complicated. You have to think, “What did I tell him last time, so that I do not get caught?”

*Bhakti* is a simple path, but if people do not want to follow, then what can be done? Otherwise, in Kaliyuga there is nothing else that can help.



## 122. Tulasī

**QUESTION:** In our country it is not easy to have *tulasī*, because there are a lot of insects eating its roots. Is it an offense to grow *tulasī* even if I know that she will survive for only one or two years?

**ANSWER:** Even here in India, *tulasī* does not survive more than that. It is a yearly plant, so in the winter most of them die, and hardly any plant survives. Then again at the end of February, you have to plant it. It is not like a tree. Very rarely does it survive two years.

**QUESTION:** In the *tulasī* garden, there are only a few leaves left [in January]. Shall I wait until they are totally dried out or what shall I do now?

**ANSWER:** You should wait. It is not the proper time to plant new *tulasīs* now, because it is still too cold, and she will not grow.

**QUESTION:** How should one pick *tulasī*? Is it proper to use the left hand, in order to support the twigs while picking the leaves with the right hand, or should one use the scissors?

**ANSWER:** Say a prayer before and after plucking *tulasī*. Do not use scissors, and do not cause unnecessary pain to her. You can support the twig with your left hand and pluck with the right hand.

**QUESTION:** Can one offer *tulasī* leaves after they have fallen on the ground? Now in winter they fall to the ground by themselves. Can one pick them up, wash, and then offer them to Kṛṣṇa?

**ANSWER:** Yes, you can offer them.

**QUESTION:** When *tulasī* dies, what shall we do with her?

**ANSWER:** You can either put them in water, such as a river or lake, etc., or you can use it for making beads, etc.

**QUESTION:** What shall we do with our broken neck beads?

**ANSWER:** Before you put on new neckbeads, you should offer them to Bhagavān. The old ones you can put in a river.

**QUESTION:** As Vaiṣṇavas, do we take Āyurvedic medicines that contain *tulasī*?

ANSWER: Better to avoid, unless you have no other alternative.

QUESTION: At home I have an ointment for the feet, and there is 0,14% *tulasī* in it. Can we also use that?

ANSWER: You should find an alternative medicine.

QUESTION: So internally we can take it, but not on the feet.

ANSWER: Internally you can take, but do not apply it on the feet. For Vaiṣṇavas, *tulasī* is honorable, so she should not be used on the feet.

QUESTION: But should Vaiṣṇavas also avoid medicine that contains *tulasī* in it, because these *tulasīs* were not used for the service of Bhagavān directly?

ANSWER: If you have an alternative medicine, then you take that. You should not disrespect things that are related to Kṛṣṇa.

## 123. Upadeśāmṛta

QUESTION: Rūpa Gosvāmī writes his first verse of *Upadeśāmṛta*:

“A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind’s demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals, is qualified to make disciples all over the world.” (BBT translation)

What is the intention and why is he starting with such a verse?

ANSWER:

*vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam  
jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam  
etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ  
sarvām apīmām pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

The verse is really not speaking about making disciples all over the world. It means he can discipline the whole earth. One who can control his senses, only he can control others or give instructions. This is the meaning of this verse. Because he has control over himself, he can control others and give instructions.

**QUESTION:** I read a booklet in which it was described that *Upadeśāmṛta* was originally spoken by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Purī when He was caught by the fisherman in the net and later on found by the devotees.

**ANSWER:** All this is an imagination of ignorant people. Just use your own brain. Mahāprabhu fell into the ocean because He was too absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa. He was in the state of *mahābhāva* and He lost His external consciousness; otherwise, why should He jump into the ocean? He thought that the ocean was the Yamuna. When He was caught in the net and brought back, still He did not come back to his external consciousness for a long time.

Now we hear that suddenly He started giving instructions. There has to be some proper relationship between the story and the instructions given. First of all, *Upadeśāmṛta* is an instruction that is meant for materialists, *bahirmukha*. It is not meant for devotees who are fixed on their path. Such devotees do not need this instruction, what to speak of those devotees who are Mahāprabhu's associates. They surely did not need this instruction. *Upadeśāmṛta* is meant for people inclined to *bhakti* in order to tell them something about devotion. So how is it that suddenly He starts giving instructions like this? Even if Mahāprabhu wanted to give instructions, He would have spoken something related with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes, because He was in that mood. A person does not suddenly talk about something unrelated to his consciousness. For example, you would not take a bath in the Yamuna and then give a sermon while you are shivering with cold.

If you have a mouth, you can talk anything. If anything like this happened, it would have been mentioned in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, His biography. We have never read anything like this anywhere. And it does not make sense. Why did Rūpa Gosvāmī not mention it? Rūpa Gosvāmī is not trying to steal Mahāprabhu's words and put his own seal on them.

**QUESTION:** What was Rūpa Gosvāmī's intention in writing *Upadeśāmṛta*, because you just said that it was meant for materialistic people?

**ANSWER:** Yes. You preach to materialistic people or those who have an inclination for *bhakti*. They are the ones who need instruction. A devotee who has taken shelter of the guru and is following the guru does not need to hear, "Do not associate with materialistic people." He does not need this instruction, for he is already following it.

QUESTION: Was *Upadeśāmṛta* written for a particular type of devotee?

ANSWER: It was written for those who are interested in taking to the spiritual path of devotion.

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the first verse in which it says that one who can control his mind is able to preach to the whole world and that the *Upadeśāmṛta* is meant only for such a person?

ANSWER: Why do you say that the rest of the text is only for that person? The first verse is just saying that if you control your senses, then you can control or discipline others also.

QUESTION: In the fourth verse, it teaches about giving and receiving. But, if we receive service from the guru, by accepting fruits, etc., from Him, is this not the wrong type of service?

ANSWER: You have to see from which level the question is being asked. Is it being asked from the level of *karma*, where the person is interested in gaining something? Is it being asked from the perspective of *yoga*, where the goal is to concentrate the mind on Paramātmā, and not in doing anything else? Is it being asked from the view point of *jñāna-mārga*, where one wants to merge into the Absolute? Or is it being asked from the level of *bhakti*, where there is a relationship (*sambandha*) of love between master and servant?

This type of thinking that you are talking about does not occur in *bhakti* but only on other paths. On the other paths, the person thinks only of himself and not of the other person. But when there is a relationship of *mamatva* (my-ness), then obviously there is giving and taking. This is what this verse is saying. However, when there is no relationship, then one only thinks in the way that you have described.

Even in material relationships there is giving and taking, so similarly in a spiritual relationship, there is also giving and taking. This type of consideration that you mentioned does not come in a relationship. So you have to see from which point this question is being asked, because the verse itself is saying that you give and take.



## 124. Upādhi (Designation)

**QUESTION:** In *Nārada-pañcarātra* (NP) there is a *śloka*, where it says that we have to give up all designations. On a practical level how can we give up all designations? Which designations should we have, and how should we function in this world?

**ANSWER:**

*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ  
tat-paratvena nirmalam  
hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa-  
sevanam bhaktir ucyate*

“Becoming free of all designations and being pure in heart by surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the service done by one’s senses is called *bhakti*.”

First one has to understand the meaning of *upādhi* (designation). Giving up *upādhi* means to make a distinction between the real object and things designated to it. For example, in case of the body, there are two things—spirit and inert matter. These are two separate items. The living entity is not the body. The body is distinct from the living entity and acts as an *upādhi*, or conditioning for it. This distinction has to be made. The body cannot be given up. It is an instrument for spiritual practice. When it is said that you give up the *upādhi*, it means that you give up the importance or your attachment to your body. This is the meaning of giving up. You don’t give up the body or your possessions; you give up your attachment to them.

Therefore, one has to know that one is not the body, and the body has to be used in service. The simple meaning of this verse (NP) is the same as in *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam* (“to be free from all motives,” BRS 1.1.11). This verse (NP) also says, *hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*—“to serve Kṛṣṇa with one’s senses is called *bhakti*.” When you serve somebody, you have to accept the authority of that person and this means that you have to give importance to that person and not to your own *upādhi*.

If you give importance to your designation, you will not be able to serve. Everything can remain the same, but it is being used in the service of Bhagavān, as the verse says. So giving up is not in its literal sense, but in the sense of giving up attachment or importance.

Just as verse SB 1.5.33 says:

*āmāyo yaś ca bhūtānām  
jāyate yena suvrata  
tad eva hy āmayam dravyam  
na punāti cikitsitam*

“O man of good principles, are not the objects which cause a disease able to cure that disease, if the same objects are taken in a medicated way?”

Whatever is causing the disease, if taken in a prescribed manner, removes the disease. This *upādhi* is a disease, because it is the cause of bondage in the material world. But if this *upādhi* is utilized properly in the service of Bhagavān, then it also becomes a means to get rid of the disease. The main thing is not to give up the *upādhi*, but to change one's consciousness. You will perform the same activities, but you will have the consciousness of pleasing Bhagavān or pleasing the guru. For example, now you cook, so that you can eat your meal. And as a devotee, you also cook, but your consciousness is that you are cooking for Bhagavān, and you will offer it to Bhagavān. After offering it, you will take it as *prasāda*. So nothing has changed in the activity, but the consciousness has changed, and this transports you from the material to the spiritual platform.

## 125. Vaiṣṇava Religion

**QUESTION:** Why is the Vaiṣṇava path so small and the other religions so wide spread?

**ANSWER:** People have their own mentality, which is in *rajas* and *tamas*. Therefore they like that which is in harmony with their own mood. The Vaiṣṇava religion, however, is *viśuddha-sattva*, or transcendental to the *guṇas*. Therefore it is very rare. For common people it is difficult to accept the Vaiṣṇava religion because of their own nature. Therefore, these other religions are more prominent and Vaiṣṇava religion is very limited. In other words, there are very few takers for *bhakti*.

The Vaiṣṇava religion is propagating principles that are *sāttvika* in nature. Vaiṣṇavas eat *sāttvika* food, but in other paths they allow meat, drinking, or sex. Naturally people like that and obviously they vote for that.

In *bhakti* there are restrictions because it is the path of *sattva*. Things which are in *rajas* and *tamas* are forbidden on this path. But the majority of people like these kinds of foods and the lifestyle in these lower *guṇas* because they are in tune with their own nature.

## 126. Varṇāśrama-dharma

**QUESTION:** Jīva Gosvāmī describes that *bhakti* can also be attained by *svābhāvika-dharma*, performing one's natural duty directed towards satisfying Śrī Hari. How does *varṇāśrama-dharma* lead to *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** *Bhakti* is the ultimate thing to be attained from *svābhāvika-dharma*, if it is executed for the satisfaction of Bhagavān. It means that you surrender to Bhagavān, and then you serve according to your *svābhāvika-dharma* (your nature), and that will take you to the pure devotional platform. If you do it for some material purpose, then you will get a material gain. But if one does it solely for the satisfaction of Bhagavān, then one will get the fortune to associate with saintly people, and by serving them, one will get *bhakti*.

**QUESTION:** Is it that this is not *bhakti*, but rather that it leads to *bhakti*, because one will get *sādhū-saṅga* and then *bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** Yes. That is what he said earlier also:

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo  
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje  
ahaituky apratihātā  
yayātmā suprasīdati*

“That is indeed the supreme duty of humanity which leads to causeless, unobstructed *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa. The self is completely satisfied by this *bhakti*.” (SB 1.2.6)

**QUESTION:** It was mentioned just now that the purpose of *varṇāśrama* is to lead one to *bhakti*. Could you explain it more? Because *varṇāśrama* is not explicitly saying that one should surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

**ANSWER:** *Varṇāśrama* leading to *bhakti* is not *uttama-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is of various types. There is *bhakti* in the *guṇas* of *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*. *Varṇāśrama* is also *bhakti* because people follow

instructions. So if it is done as an offering to Bhagavān, then it may give the result of *bhakti*. But it is not *uttama-bhakti*, which is characterized by *ānukūlyena* (by favorable service). There is no such description of this in *varṇāśrama*. *Bhakti* is of various types. The word *bhakti* is used for devotion to parents, nation, and so on. In that sense it is *bhakti*, but it is not the same word as we use in *uttama-bhakti*.

In the *Bhāgavatam* it is stated that *nirguṇa-bhakti* is of one type and the other *bhaktis* are of many types; they are in the *guṇas*. In *nirguṇa-bhakti* you are naturally absorbed in Bhagavān, but when *bhakti* is in the *guṇas*, it is in *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*. There are 81 types of *bhakti* in the *guṇas*. The word *bhakti* is used for all of them.

QUESTION: Does *nirguṇa-bhakti* mean only *uttama-bhakti* or also *vaidhī-bhakti*?

ANSWER: *Uttama-bhakti* means both, *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*.

QUESTION: If one is born in *varṇāśrama-dharma*, does one follow that in addition to doing devotional service? But what *dharma* should one follow if one is born in the West?

ANSWER: People, not only in the West but even in India, are not qualified to follow *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Therefore Śrī Caitanya propagated *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the supreme *dharma* and it is for everyone. *Varṇāśrama* was limited. Previously in India not everybody was following *varṇāśrama*. There were people who were outside *varṇāśrama* and they were called outcastes.

QUESTION: We heard in class that we couldn't really see the greatness of the *gopīs* and what they gave up, because we have no experience of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. We also had no training in surrender, because we do not know *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Is it an obstacle that we haven't been brought up in *varṇāśrama* and haven't had the training of surrender? Or is it enough if we just understand it?

ANSWER: It is obviously an obstacle if you cannot understand it. The idea is to understand it. If you cannot understand it, whether you are in *varṇāśrama* or not in *varṇāśrama*, it is an obstacle.

QUESTION: But is it an obstacle not being in *varṇāśrama-dharma*?

ANSWER: If you cannot understand *bhakti*, then it is an obstacle. Whether you are born here, there, or anywhere. Whatever may be the case, if you cannot understand it, then it is an obstacle.



**QUESTION:** We have not experienced surrender, but if we had surrendered to somebody, then it would be much easier to surrender to the guru now.

**ANSWER:** Yes. For example, have you ever worked in a business and tried to please the boss? You can use that experience to understand how to please the guru. But if you have never worked, then you have no idea of what it means to surrender. If you have worked, then you will think, "Just as I have worked there, I will work here." So it is simple. But if you have absolutely no idea of what it is like to work under somebody, then it is hard for you to understand this concept. But if you have the ability to understand it anyway, then that is all what is needed. The main thing is to get the concept of surrender and then act on it.

## 127. Vedānta-sūtra

**QUESTION:** What is the importance of the *Vedānta-sūtra* for a Vaiṣṇava? Because *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the commentary to it.

**ANSWER:** *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the commentary to *Vedānta-sūtra*, therefore it is important. But the *Bhāgavatam* is not commenting in the order of *Vedānta-sūtra*. In his book *Vedānta-darśana*, Mahārāja is the first person to explain which verse of the *Bhāgavatam* describes which *sūtra* of *Vedānta-sūtra*.

## 128. Vedic Culture

**QUESTION:** I read in a book by an Indian archeologist that originally the whole planet was Vedic, and the Vedic culture was everywhere. Is that valid or acceptable?

**ANSWER:** To begin with, it was all Vedic *dharma*, because Vedic knowledge was first given by Bhagavān. Vedic *dharma* was propagated and people were educated in this knowledge. As time went by, degradation came naturally, and so many other religions came into existence. Although in the Vedic age the Vedic *dharma* was prominent, there were also minorities that were not following Vedic *dharma*.

There are always two forces: demoniac, or *āsurika*, and divine. Previously, the divine force was prominent. Now the other one is

taking prominence. In this body we have two principles: the self and the body. When people are more interested in the self, then it is divine or Vedic culture, but when they become more and more interested in the body, then the *āsurika* culture progresses.

All the other religions that have come into existence are like subsets, because they are all part of Vedic culture. Nobody has said anything new or outside of the Vedas. But these have been described as independent of the Vedas. Other religions are not complete in themselves. Therefore, you cannot know things, such as, "Who is God, what is self, how are they related?" by reading the books of these other religions. Originally, at the beginning of creation, the Vedic *dharma* was prominent.

**QUESTION:** From the description of the *Mahābhārata* it seems that the Vedic world was limited to the Asiatic Eastern European region? There is also the theory that when Paraśurāma kicked out all the *kṣatriyas* 21 times, they fled out of that region and created different civilizations, like the Greek and Egyptian civilizations. Is there any substance to that?

**ANSWER:** Paraśurāma mainly killed Kārtavīryārjuna and his followers. Kārtavīryārjuna ruled for 66,000 years. He received a boon from Dattātreyā that he could live that long and also expand himself into many forms, because when he had to rule, he needed to have people who would also live that long. Otherwise, different groups of people would come, and he would have to train them again and again. So he had control and followers, but mainly they were all his expansions. Paraśurāma gathered all of them and killed them, and perhaps some ran away. Paraśurāma, however, did not kill all the *kṣatriyas*. If all the *kṣatriyas* had been killed, then who would have propagated these dynasties in which Bhīṣma and the Pāṇḍavas appeared? And even in Tretā-yuga Daśaratha and his lineage existed. Otherwise, from where would these lineages, including the sun and the moon dynasty, have come from? They remained intact because Paraśurāma did not kill them.

Even at the time of Yudhiṣṭhira, Sanskrit was the major, common language. When all these kings came to sacrifice, they conversed among each other in Sanskrit. There had to be some common language, and it was Sanskrit. Sanskrit was considered the language of educated people. Of course, there were also dialects, even in *mlecchas*, is mentioned. It is described in the *Mahābhārata* that when Yudhiṣṭhira was going to Vārṇāvata, where Duryodhana wanted to burn the Pāṇḍavas in the house of lac, then Vidura spoke

with him in the *mleccha-bhāṣā*, and not in Sanskrit. There were different languages, because not everyone was educated. So even in those days there were various languages. Sanskrit, however, was the common language of educated people.

QUESTION: So it is not a fact that these civilizations came from these *kṣatriyas*?

ANSWER: Maybe that is possible, but there is no confirmation. Yayāti also cursed his sons to be *mlecchas* when they did not trade their youth with his old age. He gave different curses to each of the sons.

QUESTION: The world outside of the Vedic region was not mentioned in the Vedic age?

ANSWER: Outside that Vedic world was probably just the American continent.

QUESTION: What about places like Africa? In my understanding, in the *rājasūya* sacrifice Yudhiṣṭhira had to conquer all the kings.

ANSWER: In South Africa there is still so much forest, in which most likely some tribal people were living. I do not think that there was any organized kingdom there, and also there is not much history of South Africa.

QUESTION: So we can assume that the civilized world was that region and the rest was like aborigines?

ANSWER: Yes, like in America, the red Indians were living there. I read that in Mexico they found a Gaṇeśa deity.

QUESTION: In Bolivia they were also worshipping Hanumān.

ANSWER: There must have been some link.

QUESTION: It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* that there were skins from Mexico among the gifts that the kings brought for the *rājasūya* sacrifice.

ANSWER: It is possible.

QUESTION: Some people think that Hanumān did not jump to Lanka but to South America.

ANSWER: I never heard that one. I heard some people say that he did not jump, and that he was probably here in India.

QUESTION: All these sciences, like for example *Sthāpatya-Veda* (Vastu) and *Gandharva-Veda*, originally come from Kṛṣṇa directly? And were they written down by Vyāsadeva or by other sages?

ANSWER: All these sciences come from Kṛṣṇa. Originally they all came from Him, and later on the sages expanded on all of them.

QUESTION: And did Vyāsadeva write them down?

ANSWER: Vyāsadeva only compiled them, meaning he rearranged them.

QUESTION: So Vyāsadeva did both, the material parts and spiritual parts of the Vedas?

ANSWER: Yes. Nobody is omniscient in this world. God is the only person who is omniscient, and everybody has to take knowledge from Him. All those people who do not accept God, their knowledge is not complete. Those who accept Him can get knowledge and can also further expand it. But originally the knowledge has to come from God. He is the only one who creates, and He is the only one who maintains and annihilates it. Nobody else has this power to create, maintain, and annihilate. The explanations about the creation by those who do not accept God are not proper.

For example Dayānanda Sarasvatī, who founded the Ārya Samāja, ran away from his home. During the worship of Śiva, he saw a rat eating the food that was offered to Śiva. So he thought, "If Śiva cannot even drive away this mouse, then how can he be God? And what is the use of worshipping such a God?" Then he wrote commentaries on the Vedas. But from where did he study the alphabet? Was it from his father? And from where did his father study? He had to learn from somebody. And from where did his teacher study? He, too, had to study from someone. So originally this knowledge has to come from some person, the Supreme Person. One has to accept a Supreme Person and He is the one who gave knowledge.

QUESTION: And who previously studied these sciences, like for example *Sthāpatya-Veda* or *Gandharva-Veda*? Were they studied by all *brāhmaṇas* or by specialized persons?



ANSWER: Originally, *brāhmaṇas* used to study all of the Vedas and Upavedas. For example, Kṛṣṇa studied all the 64 arts, but He studied them from a guru. That means that Sāṅdīpani Muni knew all of this, otherwise he couldn't be a teacher.

Originally, the *brāhmaṇas* used to study all that, but later on, different faculties were made because the capacity to study had diminished. Then it branched out like different departments in the university.

[See also: Arts & Culture]

## 129. Veṣa (Vaiṣṇava Sannyāsa)

QUESTION: What is the difference between *veṣa* (Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa*) and *sannyāsa* in *varṇāśrama-dharma*?

ANSWER: In *varṇāśrama*, *sannyāsa* is the fourth stage. It is *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and then *sannyāsa*. There are four types of *sannyāsa*: *kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, *parivrājaka*, and *paramahansa*. Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs* are called *bhāgavata-paramahansas*, meaning they have dedicated or surrendered everything to Kṛṣṇa.

QUESTION: Does *veṣa* (the white dress worn by a *bābāji*) exist eternally or just since Mahāprabhu?

ANSWER: It existed right from the beginning of creation, but Mahāprabhu propagated it, because it was not practiced, although it is mentioned in the scriptures.

QUESTION: Mahāprabhu took *sannyāsa* in the Māyāvāda line to preach to Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, but at the same time He propagated *veṣa*. How are we to understand this?

ANSWER: At the time of Mahāprabhu's appearance, and even before that, only the *varṇāśrama* system was known. *Bhakti* was not very popular. Therefore He took *sannyāsa* from Keśava Bhāratī, because people would not have understood His status if He had taken *veṣa*.

*Bhakti* was not the mainstream *dharma*, and if He had not taken *sannyāsa*, then they would not have listened to Him. Mahāprabhu propagated *bhāgavata-dharma*. In *varṇāśrama sannyāsa*, they

accept saffron cloth and a *daṇḍa*. In *Bhakti*, it is called *bhāgavata-paramahansa*, as Mahāprabhu propagated it. In the Gaudiya *sampradāya* there is no such tradition as wearing saffron and carrying a *daṇḍa*.

QUESTION: How can we understand the breaking of Mahāprabhu's *daṇḍa* by Nityānanda?

ANSWER: The taking of *sannyāsa* by Śrī Caitanya was just a *drama* so that people would accept His teachings. Mahāprabhu did not have the need to take *sannyāsa*. But at that time He was not popular, and when He tried to propagate *bhakti*, people were against Him. At that time in Bengal, *tantra* practice and *śakti* worship were—and still are—very prominent, so people were against Him and against *bhakti*. To pacify them, Śrī Caitanya took *sannyāsa*. But on the way to Jagannātha Puri, Nityānanda Prabhu broke the *daṇḍa*, because there was no need for it. In Puri He was not going to meet any *sannyāsī*. The breaking of the *daṇḍa* was just to signify that this *sannyāsa* was not in the real sense of being a *sannyāsī*. *Sannyāsa* signifies that he has surrendered body, mind, speech, and senses.

QUESTION: What is the qualification for taking *veṣa*?

ANSWER: The qualification for *veṣa* is complete surrender to the guru and to strictly follow him.

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QUESTION: What is *bābāji-veṣa*?

ANSWER: *Bābāji-veṣa* is made of three words: *bābā*, *jī*, and *veṣa*. The word *bābā* is used in this part of the country for people who are respectable, knowledgeable, and work for the welfare of others. They are dedicated to the service of Bhagavān. The word *bābā* is used to address them with honor and respect. Literally, *bābā* means grandfather. And *jī* is another word that shows superiority. *Jī* comes from the Sanskrit word *jayati*, just as you say *jay*, so it is a dialect of *jayati*. So it is used to give respect or show superiority. And *veṣa* means dress, specifically that which is worn by such people. It signifies that such people are fully dedicated to Bhagavān, knowledgeable, not interested in anything material, fully under the shelter of Bhagavān and His devotees, working only for other's welfare, and having complete dedication on this path. This is what *veṣa* signifies. Just as different people wear different dresses to signify certain things, so a *bābāji* wears a certain dress to signify that. It signifies the most honorable of human beings. There are

different types of human beings: first class, second class, and third class. *Bābājī* means the highest type of person. They are among the highest in the evolution of human beings.

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**QUESTION:** What are the qualifications for *bābājī-veṣa*, does one have to attain a certain high level of consciousness or spiritual advancement, or is it just dependent simply on one's conviction to follow a renounced way of life?

**ANSWER:** The qualification is complete dedication to Bhagavān. Such a person does not identify with his place of birth, designations, caste, etc. He considers himself only as a servant and is dedicated to the service of Bhagavān. Such a person is qualified to accept *bābājī-veṣa*.

**QUESTION:** I asked because in the Gauḍīya Matha, there are more people wearing saffron cloth than there are in ISKCON. When I put on saffron clothes it also helped me internally because I became more fixed. The reason for my question is: If *bābājī-veṣa* could help me to become strong in my convictions, should I be thinking in these terms for myself? If my conviction is that I want to follow this path, should I take *bābājī-veṣa*?

**ANSWER:** If one is dedicated, then one can take *veṣa*. The qualification is dedication. First one must be very firmly fixed in this; otherwise there is no point in just changing the color and style of one's dress. The person remains the same inside, no matter what one is wearing. You can change the dress 15 times a day without changing internally. Therefore, the dress should be changed only if there is conviction and proper behavior; otherwise it is meaningless. First, the quality must be there, because the dress is not going to change anything.

## 130. Virajā

**QUESTION:** Between the material and the spiritual world is the Virajā River and Saṅkarṣaṇa is lying there. What is the meaning of this Virajā River?

**ANSWER:** *Virajā* means, "free from *rajas*." It means free from the material *guṇas*. This signifies that the spiritual world is beyond the material world and its *guṇas*. The water in the Virajā River is

the sweat of the Vedas. This signifies that only by following the discipline of the Vedas can one cross the river.

## 131. Virāt-rūpa (Universal Form)

QUESTION: After establishing *bhakti* as the *abhidheya vastu* there comes this verse:

*tasmād bhārata sarvātmā  
bhagavān īśvaro hariḥ  
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca  
smartavyaś cecchatābhayam*

“Therefore, O descendant of Bharata, a person desiring freedom from fear should hear, glorify, and remember Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Regulator and Controller of everyone.” (SB 2.1.5)

After that, Śukadeva Gosvāmī makes the point to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, that one should simply hear about, glorify, and remember Bhagavān. After that, he describes the *virāt-rūpa* (SB 2.1.23). Why, after coming to this point (that one should simply hear about, glorify, and remember Bhagavān), did Śukadeva Gosvāmī describe the *virāt-rūpa*?

ANSWER: Śukadeva Gosvāmī has given the conclusion, but it is applicable only if somebody has *śraddhā*. But people do not have *śraddhā*. To help people develop *śraddhā*, they are made to understand that God is all pervading. Therefore, Śukadeva starts by describing the *virāt-rūpa*, so that one sees God everywhere and knows that everything is a manifestation of God’s body. Only then can one become devotionally inclined.

For example, right after Arjuna was shown the Universal Form by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he realized that God is everywhere. It was then that he put some trust in Kṛṣṇa, because then he understood that Kṛṣṇa is God. After that, Arjuna became respectful to Him.

The *virāt-rūpa* is explained to help people develop faith. An *uttama bhāgavata* is described in the Eleventh Canto as one who sees *bhagavad-bhāva* everywhere. Unless one sees *bhagavad-bhāva* everywhere, how can one remember or glorify Bhagavān?

This description of the *virāt-rūpa* is not for Mahārāja Parīkṣit, because he is already a devotee and an eternal associate of Bhagavān.



When Mahārāja Parīkṣit was in the womb, he saw Kṛṣṇa, who personally protected him. After that, he was always searching for Kṛṣṇa; therefore his name is Parīkṣit. This description of the *virāṭ-rūpa* is used to give instruction to common men, so that they can gradually become elevated.

Just as in *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa's instruction is not for Arjuna, but for the common man. Arjuna is used as the object of the instruction. Similarly, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* the instruction is not for Parīkṣit.

A common person does not think that this universe is a manifestation of God's energy. Therefore he tends to exploit everything. But when he sees God in this universe, then he will stop that and gradually make progress.

The qualification for one to become a devotee is given at the beginning of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2)—one should endeavor to be *nirmatsarāṇām satām*, free from enviousness and be compassionate. There are only two ways to become like that. One is that you get it by the association of a great devotee. [In *uttama-bhakti*, there is no instruction that you do this and do that, because it functions by the culture of the heart.] And the other way is that people follow some *sādhana* to attain something on their own. They are given the instruction to see God everywhere, because if they see God everywhere, then they will come to the level where they are free of envy and compassionate. That is the process of *jñāna* and *yoga*. In *jñāna-mārga* and *yoga-mārga* it is prescribed that one should be non-violent. You will follow all rules of *yoga* or *jñāna* if you perceive God everywhere.

This path of meditating on the *virāṭ-rūpa-rūpa* is shown from their point of view, but it is mixed with *bhakti*. In *uttama-bhakti*, there is no need for such instructions.

**QUESTION:** Are there devotees of the Universal Form, *viśvarūpa*?

**ANSWER:** No, a devotee does not want to see this form, because it is fearsome for him, like in the case of mother Yaśodā and Arjuna. You cannot serve the Universal Form; therefore a devotee does not want to see it—although sometimes Kṛṣṇa makes His Universal Form visible just to show His majestic power.

## 132. Vṛndāvana Dhāma, Parikramā, etc.

QUESTION: What is the difference between Goloka and Gokula Vṛndāvana?

ANSWER: Goloka is the majestic feature of Vṛndāvana, and Gokula is where Kṛṣṇa is performing His pure *mādhurya-līlā* as a "human being."

QUESTION: What is the difference between the Vrindavan that we see today and the Vṛndāvana in the *prakaṭa-līlā*?

ANSWER: There is no difference between these two. During the *prakaṭa*, or manifest pastimes, Bhagavān becomes visible to everyone present. If we are following the *ācāryas* and living and acting in Vrindavan in the same mood, then we will be able to see the *aprakaṭa-līlā* even now.

The *aprakaṭa-līlā* is in Bhagavān's own house with the curtain closed. If you are not willing to receive a nonsense person, who comes to visit you, then you hide yourself behind the curtain. In this way the unwanted guest does not see you. In the same way, Kṛṣṇa hides Himself from non-devotees; that is *aprakaṭa-līlā*.

Spiritual things are not meant for the material achievements. For example, doing Govardhana *parikramā* and taking a bath in Rādhā Kuṇḍa are not to be performed for the purpose of getting a son, because this is material. This would be a misuse of spiritual objects that are meant to give *prema*.

To receive the benefit of living in Vrindavan, one has to live in Vrindavan favorably, and then one will become attached to the guru, cows, *dhāma*, etc. The conclusion is *ānugatyam*, i.e., one should follow the previous *ācāryas*, and then one will see the *līlā* of Bhagavān even now.

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QUESTION: What is the benefit of going to Rādhā Kuṇḍa?

ANSWER: It is like a picnic, which gives some entertainment. You spend some money and that is all. You can experience this for yourself by going there.

**QUESTION:** Is Mahārāja pleased if somebody is doing service to the *dhāma*, like doing *parikramā* or bathing in the Yamunā?

**ANSWER:** If you go on *parikramā* or take a bath in the Yamunā, it is neither pleasing nor displeasing to me. This has nothing to do with me, and I have not asked you or anybody else to do it or to avoid it. You are doing it because you like it, and if you do, it is your independent choice. This, in fact, has nothing to do with devotion. This is all *samājika dharma*, or social religion. People have different ideas about religion, such as going on *parikramā*.

Especially in the Vraja area, *parikramā* is very popular. People are even doing *parikramā* of their own village. What does this have to do with *bhakti*? *Bhakti* means surrender to the guru and then work under his guidance, *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ / prātikūlyasya varjanam* (CC Madhya 22.100).

Many times people from Vraja, the *sādhus* in particular, go to Bengal or somewhere else to preach about Vrindavan. They say, “Vṛndāvana is so great. Vṛndāvana’s dust is so powerful, and so is the Yamunā, Govardhan, etc.” Because of this, many people come to Vrindavan and go on *parikramā*. And then these preachers will say, “If you do not have a son [of course that is not a problem in the West, but in India to get a son is a big deal], then do *parikramā* around Govardhana and you will get a son.” Then these people do *parikramā*, but they do not get a son. Then they come and ask me, “What is the benefit of doing *parikramā*?” Somebody has pain in their joints, so the preachers recommend that if they do Govardhana *parikramā*, their joint pain will go away; but nothing happens. These are social customs and they have nothing to do with *bhakti*.

*Parikramā* is part of the worship of Bhagavān. But these people are not worshipping anything. They do not understand what *parikramā* is and why they are doing it. Just because many people are doing it, they also do it. Because if one does not do it, people will say, “Oh you did not go on *parikramā*? We went on Govardhana *parikramā* or to Kumbhamelā and you did not go?” Then one feels inferior because others went and he didn’t; therefore people do *parikramā*. This has nothing to do with me. It does not please or displease me.

**QUESTION:** But *parikramā* is mentioned in the different scriptures of the Gosvāmīs, such as in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and they say that it is conducive for *bhakti*.

**ANSWER:** So many things are mentioned in the scriptures. You choose something and follow it, because it increases your digestion

power or health. But you are not doing it out of devotion. If you are so interested in devotion, then why don't you do what the guru says? The very reason you are doing *parikramā*, etc., is that you have your own interest, and when you have your own interest, no matter what you do, that is not devotion. When you take shelter of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* or anything, then you are just trying to rationalize what you want to do, or you are doing something that is done in society. But these people do not know *bhakti*, and you are following them. And if somebody asks you why you are doing it, you answer by saying, "Because *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* says to do it." But *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* says, *gurupādāśraya tasmāt, kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-śikṣaṇam, viśrambheṇa guroḥ-sevā sādhu vartmānuvartanam*—take shelter of a guru, take initiation, learn the process of *bhakti* from him, do service to the guru, and follow in the footsteps of saintly people. This is the process of *bhakti*. This is the first step or foundation of *bhakti*, and if you are not following this, then you are only building castles in the air.

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**QUESTION:** In *Upadeśāmṛta* it is mentioned that one should take a bath in Rādhā Kuṇḍa every day, and there are people who are doing this. For what kind of people is this instruction meant?

**ANSWER:** One should live there, being a follower of those who are attached to Kṛṣṇa. This is the instruction given in the verse. One should not live there independently. You are supposed to follow in the footsteps of those who have *anurāga* and serve them. Then it has meaning. Rūpa Gosvāmī is giving these instructions to show how those who have *uttama-bhakti* live. You can see the effect of living in Vraja independently. Many people who are living here in Vraja are mostly *bahirmukhas* and even more materialistic than those living outside Vraja.

**QUESTION:** Does it make sense to visit Rādhā Kuṇḍa at all on our level? Or what meaning does a pilgrimage to Rādhā Kuṇḍa then have for us?

**ANSWER:** It has no meaning. People go there for fun, like people go on a picnic.

**QUESTION:** It is also mentioned that one has to follow people who have *anurāga*. Is that the spiritual master?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

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**QUESTION:** Tonight it is Rādhā Kuṇḍa's appearance day. What is the significance of taking bath there at this time?

**ANSWER:** The significance of Rādhā Kuṇḍa or such places are in relationship with *bhakti*. If one is a devotee, then these places act as a reminder of Bhagavān and His pastimes, because they are related to Him. They act as a catalyst, exciting the devotional mood of a devotee, so that one may become more absorbed in devotion. Because Rādhā Kuṇḍa is very dear to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who are our worshipables, then Rādhā Kuṇḍa is also worshipable because it is related to Them. Many of Their pastimes were performed there. If we have love for Kṛṣṇa, then we have love for His places also.

Statements, such as, "If you fast or take bath, then you will attain something," are for increasing the interest of non-devotees. The common man is interested in gaining something material, and if you want to inspire him to do something related to religion, then you have to give him some material benefit, something that he wants. Therefore, you have to tell him about some benefit or boon that he will receive if he does something devotional, and then he will do it.

**QUESTION:** It seems that in Vaiṣṇava culture there is big emphasis placed on the *samādhi* mandirs of the great Vaiṣṇavas. Is it important to go there? Does it help someone to understand *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, if he goes to Rūpa Gosvāmī's *samādhi*? Is there some help or benefit from going there?

**ANSWER:** In *varṇāśrama* system, when a person dies, there is the ceremony of burning the body; it is the second last *saṁskāra*. But when somebody has taken *bhāgavata-sannyāsa-veśa*, then he is outside the *varṇāśrama* system. He has no relationship with his family or children, if he had any before. If he is not married, then, of course, there is no question of that. There is no possibility of *dāha-saṁskāra* or somebody burning his body. According to the *smṛti-śāstra*, this ceremony is done by the sons or people who are coming in his line and are qualified to do it. They lit the fire and do *piṇḍa-dāna*, the offering of oblations. But because a *bhāgavata-sannyāsī* is completely surrendered to Bhagavān, he is not related to his family anymore. His *gotra* also changes, it becomes *acyuta-gotra*. *Dāha-saṁskāra* cannot be done for him, because there is no injunction or process prescribed. Therefore, he is either buried in the ground or his body is thrown into the water. In our *sampradāya* the custom is to bury the body.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself has demonstrated this in the case of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. The main thing is to bury the body. In order to remember the person, you build a structure on top of it. This is done to remember that they are great devotees of Bhagavān. It isn't required that people worship at these *samādhis*.

**QUESTION:** There is no injunction to do that. But is there also no special benefit from worshipping them?

**ANSWER:** The questions of benefit do not arise in *uttama-bhakti*. Just leave this process alone, because *bhakti* is not done for benefit.

**QUESTION:** But doesn't that increase our devotion?

**ANSWER:** This kind of thinking is also material. The only thing is that you are trying to cover your material thinking by some spiritual name. People take *dīkṣā*, but they do not accept the guru. They would rather go and worship the *samādhi*. What benefit will they get? If you have read *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, there is no mention that you have to worship the *samādhi*.

The Taj Mahal also was made as a *samādhi*. When it was made, it was not meant for business or any such thing. It was built in the memory of a queen. But now it has become a big business point—a ticket is 1000 rupees. This was not the original purpose. In the same way, the original purpose of the *samādhi* was not anything like that. But later on, everything becomes social and people take advantage. They propagate that by worshipping you will get such and such benefit. Because you will be inspired only if you think you are getting some benefit; otherwise nobody will do it. In the process, the *samādhi* owners will get the real benefit in the form of donations.

**QUESTION:** It was explained yesterday that Vaiṣṇavas who take *veśa* are outside of the *varṇāśrama* system. You also mentioned that Haridāsa Ṭhākura was the first one that was put into *samādhi* by the hands of Mahāprabhu. Was this also because he came from a Muslim family and his body couldn't be burned anyway?

**ANSWER:** Haridāsa Ṭhākura was put into *samādhi*, because he was a *paramahansa* Vaiṣṇava. This has nothing to do with his birth.

**QUESTION:** I heard that the great Vaiṣṇavas are put into *samādhi* because their bodies are spiritualized, because they are fully dedicated to Bhagavān. Are these Vaiṣṇavas still present there in their *samādhis*—as I heard—so that one can pray to them there?

ANSWER: They are present everywhere, not only in their *samādhis*. You can pray to them anywhere, because Bhagavān is all-pervading. This is the significance of His appearance from the pillar to protect Prahlāda Mahārāja. This was to show His all-pervasive feature. In the same way, His associates are all-pervading.

Wherever you remember them, you can pray to them. You do not have to go to their *samādhi*. The *samādhi* is made basically for their remembrance. If people cannot remember them anywhere, then at least they can remember them by going there. But if you pay obeisances even to one piece of grass, considering it as God, then God will accept this, because He is everywhere.

QUESTION: Beside the *samādhi* of Sanātana Gosvāmī at Rādhā-Madan-Mohan Mandir, there is a *samādhi* called *grantha samādhi*, where, it is said, very confidential scriptures of the Gosvāmīs are walled in. Is that true?

ANSWER: Sometimes *samādhis* like this are made for old scriptures, which cannot be used, so that one does not disrespect them. But this *samādhi* is too small for all the scriptures of the Gosvāmīs. Once the *samādhi* was opened to see what was inside it, and they found nothing.

QUESTION: In the *Brahmā-saṁhitā*, it is mentioned that Vṛndāvana is made of *cintāmaṇi*. What does *cintāmaṇi* mean?

ANSWER: *Cintāmaṇi* means that which fulfills your desires.

QUESTION: Many people believe if they just leave their body here in Vrindavan, they will go to Kṛṣṇa-loka. What is the actual destination of somebody who leaves his body in Vrindavan?

ANSWER: Just by dying you do not go to the abode of Bhagavān. It depends on one's consciousness, as Kṛṣṇa Himself says in Gītā 8.5, "One who thinks of Me alone, even at the time of death while departing from the body, attains My nature. There is no doubt about this." Whatever consciousness one has at the time of death, he attains that destination.

Generally, those who die here go to hell. Because people who live outside of Vrindavan have some respect for Vrindavan, whereas those who live here, have no respect. They commit offenses. How can they attain the abode of Bhagavān if they are offensive to His abode?



Dying in Vrindavan is not instrumental in your destination. Your consciousness is instrumental. As it is said in *Upadeśāmṛta* 8, *tiṣṭhan vraje tad-anurāgi janānugāmī*, “While staying in Vraja, one should follow the devotees who have love for Kṛṣṇa.” The *śāstras* say that the qualification to live here is surrender to Bhagavān and His devotees, to associate with them and serve them. That is the meaning of living in Vraja. Saying that such and such devotee has attained the abode of Bhagavān is to say some nice words about a dead person.

People generally are offenders in knowledge. They all know that this is the abode of Bhagavān, and it is to be honored and respected. But they use it for their own selfishness, such as getting respect and worship from others. Those people, who are interested in their own respect, worship, and honor, cannot go to the abode of Bhagavān. If they live here, they have to accept that this is the abode of Bhagavān, and they have to behave accordingly.

Although the abode has the power, it does not give the benefit to unqualified people. Ajāmila was not living in Vṛndāvana, but he went to Vaikuṇṭha just by *nāmābhāsa* (semblance of the name) because he was not an offender.

**QUESTION:** Why does the *dhāma* tolerate such people?

**ANSWER:** The *dhāma* is tolerant just as parents who may be tolerant of their frivolous or naughty son. Although they do not like his behavior, they tolerate it and hope that he will be better one day. That is their *vātsalya-bhāva*, or mercy. The abode also tolerates—much like the parents.

**QUESTION:** What is the reality in Vraja, *aiśvarya* (majesty) or *mādhurya* (simplicity)? Because there are descriptions of the *aiśvarya* part of it, like the ground is *cintāmaṇi*, etc. Is that the reality, but covered by *mādhurya*, or is it ordinary like we see it here?

**ANSWER:** In Vraja there is complete *aiśvarya* and complete *mādhurya*. *Mādhurya* is founded on *aiśvarya*. *Aiśvarya* means the qualities or the potency to do work. So if the person to be served has no good qualities, no enthusiasm, no energy, and no brain, then how much sweetness or *mādhurya* will there be in that? But if there is a person, who has energy, intelligence, wealth, and all good qualities, yet, he is not proud of them nor does he want to exploit others on account of those things but only wants to serve others, then that is *mādhurya*.



*Mādhurya* means to perform service to the person with whom you are related. And when the person is pleased, there is a feeling of satisfaction, and this is called *mādhurya*, or sweetness—*uttama-bhakti*. God Himself has complete *aiśvarya*, but He acts or works like a human being. By seeing that, His devotees are satisfied. And when the devotees see that Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, then they feel happy.

If you have a relationship, whether it is servant and master, father and son, or lover and beloved, then sweetness means to work according to the relationship. But that is only possible if you have the ability to act in that relationship. So *aiśvarya* is needed. The devotees, however, are not interested in *aiśvarya* only, nor does Kṛṣṇa want to display His *aiśvarya*. This does not mean that it is not there, so *cintāmaṇi dhāma* and the *kalpa-taru* (wish-fulfilling tree) are also there, but there is no *prajojana*, or purpose to realize them.

Actually, the ultimate education is for you to learn this philosophy of *uttama-bhakti*, in which you work for the pleasure of Bhagavān, and that is what gives you satisfaction. Try to imagine how beautiful the world would be if people were actually living and acting without personal agenda and just for the satisfaction of others. Then nobody would be interested in just seeing the *aiśvarya*.

*Aiśvarya* means that which is useful or purposeful. If somebody has wealth, knowledge, position, power, and influence, then that person has *aiśvarya*. But it also means that if you have some need, then you will be attracted to such a person, because you know that you can get some help from such a person. This is where the personal motive comes in. In the material world, if somebody is very rich, then you want to have a relationship with that person, because you know that you can get something from him.

In *mādhurya*, however, this personal motive is not there. It is not that the person is not rich or does not have wealth or does not have knowledge, but the tendency to get some motive fulfilled from this person is missing. In Vraja everybody has *aiśvarya*; therefore everybody is completely satisfied in themselves.

If an ordinary person is hungry, he will not think, "Let me feed the other person." He will think of feeding himself. But the eternal associates in Vraja are all fully satisfied. They do not think of their personal enjoyment and they do not have any desires. This is the definition of *uttama-bhakti*: *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*—complete freedom from any desire. Therefore they are able to do service. And when they do service in their particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa, it is very sweet, because they do not desire anything for themselves.

This is the type of education that Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to give to this world, because this is how people should live. This is not something that a person achieves after death. You are meant to practice it here. This is the ultimate education.

So in Vraja both, complete *aiśvarya* and complete *mādhurya* exist, but *aiśvarya* does not take the predominant role. For example, if somebody has a son who is without good qualities, then there is no *mādhurya* in that. If the son, however, is a wonderful person, has all good characteristics, knowledge, wealth, beauty, power, etc., and at the same time he is not proud at all, then how much sweetness will there be? He is not proud and he acts like a normal person, although he has so many extraordinary qualities. When a person has pride about his qualities, he will exploit others.

*Mādhurya* means that even Kṛṣṇa, who is the ultimate embodiment of all opulences, does not have arrogance about Himself. He remains like a simple person. When He lifted Govardhana hill, all the *vraja-vāsīs* glorified Him, but He said, "No, no, there is nothing special about Me, there is no greatness in Me. I did it because I got blessings from all of you. And anyway all of these cowherd boys were helping Me. They were also putting their sticks up to hold the mountain, and Balarāma was also helping." He did not take any pride in what He did, and that is what makes the relationship so sweet.

The meaning of *uttama-bhakti*, or *vraja-bhakti*, is to have complete *aiśvarya* and yet not have any air about oneself. It means to be super normal, yet to act like a normal person for the welfare of the other. Only when you have *aiśvarya* can you do service. If you do not have *aiśvarya*, then what service will you do? You will be thinking of fulfilling your own needs.

In this way, the *aiśvarya* exists in Vṛndāvan, if somebody wants to see it. But the devotees are not interested in it.

**QUESTION:** Why is there no description in *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* of Kṛṣṇa's abode? It simply says *parām gati* or it says *dhāma*, but it gives no information what this abode is like or what goes on in that abode. This is all in the commentaries.

**ANSWER:** There is an explanation of the *dhāma* in the *Bhāgavatam*. First it is *vaiyatapatik brahman*, which means there are descriptions about His birth and His activities. They are happening in some place, and that place is His own place, because He is situated in His own abode.

QUESTION: But that is not explicit in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, that is all the theology of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, but nowhere in the text itself does it say that this abode is the same as some other abode. That is a 16th Century Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava view.

ANSWER: It is not only commentary, but there is *pramāṇa* (scriptural evidence) for that.

QUESTION: Where?

ANSWER: In other *Purāṇas*.

QUESTION: But not in the *Bhāgavatam*? There is nothing in it, which connects Kṛṣṇa's activities in His incarnation with eternal *līlās* in Goloka, there is no statement made.

ANSWER: There may not be direct statements. I explained earlier that the *Bhāgavatam* is not saying everything directly. Jīva Gosvāmī has analyzed many statements which were spoken when Kṛṣṇa was not present, but the *śloka*s are used in the present tense. One such example is verse no 10.90.48. He has given a detailed explanation of this verse in *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbha*. This means that Kṛṣṇa is present always. Similarly verse 4.8.42 says that Kṛṣṇa ever resides in Madhuvana or Mathurā.

And there are statements in the Vedas as to where Bhagavān is situated. He is situated in His own *mahimā*. There are also statements that say that His abode is unlimited, and that He does not leave His abode. So when you see the *Bhāgavatam* in the light of all these statements, then you understand that this place here is also His own place.

There is also a *śloka* in the *Bhāgavatam* that states that Bhagavān is ever present in Mathurā:

*rājadhānī tataḥ sābhūt  
sarva -yādava-bhūbhūjam  
mathurā bhagavān yatra  
nityam sannihito hariḥ*

“Since that time, the city of Mathurā, where Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is ever present, became the capital of all the kings of the Yadu dynasty.”  
(SB 10.1.28)

Jīva Gosvāmī has shown many statements like this from the *Bhāgavatam*. They may not be direct statements, but by analysis he shows that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is ever-present in Vṛndāvana.

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**QUESTION:** Dhruva-loka, the pole star, is described as a Vaikuṇṭha planet within the material world. What is the purpose of a Vaikuṇṭha planet in this material world, and who is going to this planet?

**ANSWER:** There is no Vaikuṇṭha in the material world, because Vaikuṇṭha is a transcendental place. So it cannot exist in the material world. But just as Vṛndāvana exists here on the planet earth, although it is also Bhagavān's abode and even superior to Vaikuṇṭha, in the same way, Dhruva's planet also exists.

These are all pastimes of Bhagavān for the people in the material world, so that they can become interested in *bhakti*. But no one can go there without devotion. Only those who are devotees or who have the grace of Bhagavān, can enter into Vaikuṇṭha. You can go to a transcendental abode if you have transcendental consciousness. But if your consciousness is not transcendental, then when you see Vṛndāvana, Dvārakā, or Ayodhyā, they will appear material. These are abodes of Bhagavān, but if our vision is material, then they will only appear as material to us. They will not reveal themselves to us.

**QUESTION:** Yesterday you mentioned that this *līlā-smaraṇam* was propagated after Mahāprabhu and the Gosvāmīs. When was this *līlā-smaraṇam* propagated and by whom?

**ANSWER:** *Smaraṇam* is a part of *bhakti*. It existed from the beginning. Rūpa Gosvāmī himself wrote verses about *līlā-smaraṇam*, called *Smaraṇam-maṅgala-stotra*. Making that the basis, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja wrote *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. So *līlā-smaraṇam* was there right from the beginning, because it is part of devotion.

The type of *smaraṇam*, however, that people are talking about now was not needed by the Gosvāmīs, because they were truthful people. But later on, when unqualified people came to that path, they used everything for the maintenance of the body—to obtain food, wealth, and enjoyment. This is the case with everything, whether it is *smaraṇam*, *kīrtana*, or anything. Everything is used simply for sense pleasure.



There was not as much *kīrtana* before as you can see at present. Now *kīrtana* is being done for everything. If somebody dies, there is *kīrtana*; when they are taking the dead body, they are doing *kīrtana*. If somebody gets married, there is *kīrtana*, and it is somebody's birthday, then there is also *kīrtana*. This much *kīrtana* was never done before. But what is the effect of all this *kīrtana*? It is simply entertainment.

The Gosvāmīs and other devotees also did *kīrtana*, and now people in general are doing *kīrtana*. The difference is that now it is just for material purposes and not for the purpose for which it is intended. When people are offensive and have a materialistic mind, they use everything for their material goals.

The main degradation came after India became independent. When I came to Vrindavan, there were no *sannyāsīs* here and nobody was wearing saffron cloth. They were all Vaiṣṇavas wearing white. And Bhaktisiddhānta came only once, but he did not stay here. He met Paṇḍita Bābā. The Gauḍīya Matha did not exist. Nobody even heard that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas were wearing saffron. But slowly, slowly, around the Sixties, things were changing, as people became more materialistic, and religion was getting lost. It is all in the last forty years that things have changed so much. This is all because of the disqualification of the people themselves. When people are not sincere, they use religion, God, or anything for their own materialistic gains. For example, Buddhists propagated non-violence, but their followers are doing violence. Most of them eat meat.

This happens with every religion, and there is nothing new about it. In the beginning, people are sincere, and later on unqualified people come and take advantage of the process for their materialistic goals.

The degradation came when transportation came to Vrindavan. In the later part of the British rule the train line was laid. There were no roads here. When the trains came, then naturally it became easier for people to come to Vrindavan, and then people who were not really qualified started coming. Before, there were no trains or roads, and people had to walk all the way. It was not easy, because it was all a forest area. There were no proper paths.

Only those people who were really interested in devotion used to come, because they had knowledge about it and had faith. And when they decided to come, they would give up their family life completely. Before leaving, they would meet with everybody. It was

just like when person is going away and the relatives will never see him again. He would take leave from all his family members. It was a great occasion that somebody is going to Vrindavan. And then the person would come with great difficulty by walking. It was especially difficult for somebody to come from Bengal, for he had to walk for months and months, passing through difficult areas. Once they came here, they never went back. If somebody comes with such great difficulty, naturally he will not plan to have fun here. Only very serious people came. Generally they came at an advanced age. They were educated people. You cannot expect that these people would delve into sense enjoyment.

Vrindavan had its natural Vrindavan mood. You can imagine people of that caliber, who were learned and educated, knowing Sanskrit, living here. People came from good backgrounds, from good families. If somebody ever went back by chance under certain circumstances, he was very much honored in society. People would say, "This person has come from Vrindavan."

But when Vrindavan became linked by train, unqualified people came, and then the atmosphere became degraded. Later, when the roads were built, then people started coming for picnics. Once I went by train to Indore to take my exams. Because I had a shaved head, people naturally knew that I was a *sādhū*. They asked me if I was from Vrindavan and inquired, "Is it true that you can get women for enjoyment in Vrindavan?" That means by that time the atmosphere had already become so bad that people had begun to think in such a degraded way. I did not know anything about such things, but from the very question, it was obvious that something must have been going on there.

Now all the vices like meat eating, drinking, etc., exist in Vrindavan. Therefore, sometimes people come and ask, "What is the difference between here and the city?" It is obvious that there is no difference, because the same types of people come, and they want the same type of facility and atmosphere. So what Vrindavan was before and what it is now, are two separate things.

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**QUESTION:** We heard that Vrindavan is a good place for performing *bhakti*, is that true?

**ANSWER:** Theoretically it is a fact, but practically it is not, because people have spoiled or defiled Vrindavan by their improper behavior. People do not follow the principles of religion. *Dharma*

means discipline, and if discipline is followed, then it is a proper place. But when people do not follow the discipline, then it loses its value. This is the case with all holy places at present. What is said about these holy places is true in theory, but practically it is not seen.

**QUESTION:** Is it better to perform *bhakti* outside of Vrindavan if somebody is really following sincerely?

**ANSWER:** If one is sincere, then he can follow it outside or inside. The main thing is sincerity, which means following guru and *śāstra* with favorable acts. This is the essence. Because people have mixed the philosophy with material concepts, it becomes difficult to understand and realize it. But if one is sincere, then one can follow it anywhere.

**QUESTION:** So at that level it is the same?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** There is no difference. Does everything speed up and happen faster in Vrindavan?

**ANSWER:** It is up to the sincerity of the person.

**QUESTION:** Previously I heard that for devotees who are not on a very high level, it is very good if they have association with the *dhāma* and the *sādhus*, so that they will get more faith and strength in their spiritual life. But from your answer, it seems that it is not so.

**ANSWER:** Any place is good if you can get association. The *sādhus* here are mainly in dress only. People come to this place and carry their old desires, old attachments to their body, family life, place of birth, and old concepts. They just change the dress, because *sādhus* also have a certain way of dressing. So they just put on a new dress, but remain the same. Most of them are criminals. They are not *sādhus*, so what good is the association of such people? They are the same people that you will find in society, but they are dressing as *sādhus*. These people are *sādhus* in name and dress only, but they are not *sādhus* according to the definition of the word "*sādhū*." Such association does not have any value.

**QUESTION:** And what about the descriptions of the holy *dhāma* that say that every tree is a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* and the dust is *cintāmaṇi*? Should we see all trees, etc., like this?



ANSWER: In the *dhāma*, there is a mixture of both, material and spiritual. If your vision is material, then you only see matter, and if your *bhāva* is spiritual, then you can see the spiritual side of it.

The people that have described the *dhāma* like that had spiritual vision, and they have described what they saw. It is just like the deity. If you do not have a spiritual vision, then it just looks material, and if you have spiritual vision, then the same deity looks spiritual. This is also the case with the *dhāma*.

Even when Kṛṣṇa was present, it was like this, because the *dhāma* is a mixture of both. It is not that everybody is seeing what is described. It looks ordinary to an ordinary person. If everything in Vṛndāvana would be transcendental, then people would steal it and take it away. One's vision depends on one's advancement and *bhāva*.

To those people whose minds are absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* and who have attained this *bhāva*, Vṛndāvana appears spiritual. But to those who have material vision, it appears material. There are two *bhāvas* that people have: *prīti* and *vidveṣa* (liking and disliking). When one likes the *dhāma*, their vision is spiritual, and those who dislike the *dhāma* will see everything in the *dhāma* as material. This liking is also transcendental. For example, you can like the cows or not like them. When you like them and have a simple heart, then you have a different feeling about them. And if you do not like them, then the cow is just like any other animal. The same is with the *dhāma*. When the mood is devotional, then things related to Kṛṣṇa appear different. When the mood is not devotional, then they appear like ordinary objects.

When the *bhāva* is not there, then this spiritual description will have no purpose for you. If a person does not like devotion, then why should anything spiritual manifest to such a person? And if you like it, then naturally it will become manifest. It depends on your *bhāva*. The descriptions are given from the platform of *bhāva* only, which means that an ordinary person cannot perceive it with his senses.

## 133. War

QUESTION: In these days, there is the atmosphere of war between India and Pakistan. What is a devotee supposed to think? Should they think, "I depend on Kṛṣṇa, so I just stay in Vṛndavan



and see what Kṛṣṇa wants,” or is a devotee supposed to make some arrangement, such as going to some safer place or store some food, etc.?

ANSWER: First of all, war is inevitable, either now or later, because there is always a fight going on between the divine and demoniac potencies. Now the *āsurika* power is becoming very prominent. We have to always stand on the right side and as far as possible support the right people. If you feel that something is going to be short in supply or that something is going to be a problem, you should plan to take care of that.

## 134. West, Being in the West

QUESTION: How can we maintain our *bhakti* consciousness in the West? What is the most important thing to do?

ANSWER: You should read the scriptures as much as possible, listen to lectures, chant, associate with people who are interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Associate with other people only as much as it is necessary.

QUESTION: How far can we go to make compromises? For example, to maintain relationships in business or studies, sometimes we have to eat *bhoga*, which is vegetarian but not offered. Where is the limit? Is one still protected?

ANSWER: As far as possible, you should avoid these situations. And if there is no other possibility, then you should not do it from your heart. Do it as in an emergency situation without becoming attached to it.

QUESTION: How can we maintain our relationship with Gurudeva in the West?

ANSWER: Remember and serve him mentally (*mānasi sevā*).

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QUESTION: How can we have *sādhū-saṅga*, when we are not physically present with the guru?

ANSWER: You can have his association mentally.

**QUESTION:** Can you elaborate more on how one can serve the guru mentally?

**ANSWER:** *Sevā* means to cooperate, to have liking, to support, and to have the feeling that guru is one's own (*mamatva*). When this feeling is there, then you will know what is to be done.

**QUESTION:** Is there such a thing as service in separation in *uttama-bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** What do you mean?

**QUESTION:** I mean, can I serve the guru by following his instructions, even if he is here in Vrindavan and I am somewhere else?

**ANSWER:** Obviously there is service in separation, because you cannot always be with him. Even when you go to your house, he is not physically present in front of your eyes, so there is separation. Even if he goes to the other room, there is separation. There are also different types of separation, short separation or long separation. If we depart from each other now, we are separated, but we will meet again.

**QUESTION:** For example, if one is separated for a longer period of time because they live in the West, what is the best way for that person to serve the guru?

**ANSWER:** You do your regular duty there, and remember him. Suppose you have a job there, so what service can you do? You can give monetary help; that is the only service you can do there, besides maintaining your spiritual life.

**QUESTION:** In that way will we make advancement?

**ANSWER:** It depends on you. It is not something that you can measure by feet or kilograms, as it is a matter of consciousness. If you follow, then you will progress, but if you do not follow, then you will not progress.

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**QUESTION:** In the absence of the physical presence of the guru, because the disciple is in another country, how does the disciple serve the guru?

ANSWER: *Bhakti* is based on *mamatva* (my-ness or attachment), and this is the basic essence of *vraja-bhakti*. So if the disciple has *mamatva* for the guru, then it does not matter if he is close or far away. And if that *mamatva* is not there, then also it does not matter if he is close or far away.

For example, a person may have a pet hen, and there is also a hen in the nearby forest. That person has attachment for his pet hen, but not for the forest hen. If the forest hen is killed, he does not bother about it, but if his pet hen dies, then he will feel pain about it. In the same way, there are only two *vṛttis* of the mind: attachment and dislike. So if you have attachment to the guru, then you will cooperate wherever you are, because distance is not the criteria. And if there is no liking but a disliking, then you will not cooperate.

Take for example a mother and her child. Because the mother has affection for the child, she takes care of him. But this is not the same in the case of a maidservant who does not have affection for the child. She takes care of the child because she is receiving a salary. Because the mother has affection, that affection naturally guides her, and if the mother does not have affection for the child, she will also not bother for the child. It is not just because somebody is a mother that she takes care of the child. The real reason behind it is *mamatva* (the affection or attachment). It is the affection or attachment (*mamatva*) that guides the person.

If you hate or dislike somebody, then your mind will give you so many ways for you to destroy the person you dislike. You may think how to kill him, create trouble, not cooperate, or put obstacles in his way. In the same way, if you have a liking or attachment, then the mind will give you ideas for service. A mother, because of attachment, naturally has the feelings which impel her to take care of the child. This path is based on that feeling of attachment.

There are disciples, who live nearby and close to me, but they do not have any liking for me. But some, who are living in other countries, are more connected to me. The basic thing is this feeling. Because of attachment and detachment the mind is the cause of bondage, but it is also the cause of liberation.

QUESTION: When there is no attachment for guru and Kṛṣṇa, then the enjoying mood is actually an aversion to God.

ANSWER: Obviously. When one dislikes God, one will turn one's face away from Him. This is the meaning of the word *bahirmukha*. Instead of turning to Kṛṣṇa, one turns towards sense enjoyment.

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QUESTION: When the devotee is away from guru and not with him directly, still he has some experiences and feels some happiness. Is this due to Kṛṣṇa being personally pleased?

ANSWER: The path of *bhakti* is based on *mamatva* or a relationship with Bhagavān, therefore distance does not matter. You can be close or far away. Your satisfaction comes only from *ānukūlya* and not from anything else. The distance is not an obstacle, because the *ātmā* is not obstructed by anything material.

QUESTION: What qualifications, defects, and obstacles do Western devotees have in the practice of *bhakti* compared to Indian devotees? Although it is always problematic to generalize, are there general characteristics?

ANSWER: I will give an analogy for you to understand the difference. If you observe the people, who are living here in the *dhāma* and the people who visit just for a few days, then you will see the difference between these two types of people. Those who come from outside have a lot of faith and they like to do service here. They engage in devotional activities, try to develop the place, and spend money. In fact, whatever development you see here is done by people from outside and not by local people.

Those who are living here have no heart and are very cruel, and they do not want to understand any philosophy. If you further extend this analogy, then even the people who come from Bengal, Orissa, or Assam have much more *śraddhā*, awe, and reverence for this place, than the people who come here from a nearby place.

In the same way, foreigners who come here, have more interest and ability to grasp the philosophy. And the reason is that they work very hard and are not offensive as are the local people. Because those from outside come with a purpose, they are able to understand much more than the people of this place. This is the difference.

Bhaktivedānta Swami, for example, when he was living here in Vrindavan, he was not able to convince even one person about his philosophy. Because local people have hardly any real interest in *bhakti*. But when he went out of the country, he convinced so many people.



## 135. Women

**QUESTION:** In *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* in the purport it is mentioned that Mahāprabhu had three and a half confidential associates. (CC Adi 10.137: "Caitanya Mahāprabhu had three and a half very confidential devotees. The three were Svarūpa Gosāṇi, Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya, and Śikhi Māhiti. Śikhi Māhiti's younger sister, Mādhavi Devī, being a woman, was considered the half.") Could you explain more about them?

**ANSWER:** Nothing much is known except that they are associates of Mahāprabhu.

**QUESTION:** And why is it three, why is the lady considered as a half?

**ANSWER:** That is because they counted ladies as half.

**QUESTION:** Half confidential or because she is a woman?

**ANSWER:** Because she is a woman. Now you can make it four, but in those days they counted women as a half person. Now it is not three and a half, so you may change it and make it four. Previously, in Christianity they said that women do not have souls, and similarly in Bengal they said that women have half of a soul.

Only Śrī Caitanya gave complete status to women in everything, whether it was worship of Śālagrāma, worship of the deity, chanting, or initiation. Before Him no one else allowed women to do those things. In *varṇāśrama* or even in other Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*, women were always considered as less than men. But Śrī Caitanya gave them equal rights, as far as devotion is concerned.

**QUESTION:** What was Śrī Caitanya's attitude towards women, because He allowed them to do many things, from which they were barred previously.

**ANSWER:** Mahāprabhu had an equal vision toward woman, because every human being has a right to worship Bhagavān, and there is no discrimination in that. Therefore, He gave equal rights to women to worship just like men. He ordained that women should not be discriminated against when it comes to the service of Bhagavān.

**QUESTION:** But why was He so strict with Choṭa Haridāsa, who begged rice from a woman?

**ANSWER:** The punishing of Choṭa Haridāsa was done to warn people that they should not take advantage of these equal rights for women. Because people, in general, have the tendency to get into material relations, which have nothing to do with spiritual life. So this was an example for us. *Bhakti* means not having any other desire or motive but to serve Bhagavān. For that, Mahāprabhu gave equal rights to both, men and women.

But it is not proper to think that because He has given equal rights, therefore men and women can mingle together, and men can exploit women in material dealings for enjoying. Mahāprabhu did not allow that in the name of spirituality one starts to flirt.

Therefore, He gave this warning by punishing His associate. Of course, there was no harm done to him, but He punished him to teach others that the tendency of people in the material world is to misuse the principle. Nowadays, many *sādhus* go to houses and beg for food, and this is called *mādhukarī*. The original idea was that the *sādhus* should not keep anything for themselves nor make any arrangements for their maintenance. They were completely absorbed in doing service, and to support their bodies, they would beg for food. But in that begging they establish relationships with women, because it is the women who are in the house and cook the food. Men go out in the fields and do their jobs outside the home. So the *sādhus* establish a relationship with women and then they deviate from the original principle for which *mādhukarī* or begging was actually instituted. By the example of Choṭa Haridāsa, Mahāprabhu was giving instructions that *sādhus* should be very careful. He said, "Now you want to beg rice, but later ..." Although Choṭa Haridāsa's intention was to beg for Śrī Caitanya, it was still not proper that he would go and meet women. The person who was punished was a *sannyāsi*; they are not supposed to have any dealings with women, therefore Mahāprabhu forbade this kind of activity.

There were so many women associates of Mahāprabhu, and He was eating food from their hands. Many of these devotees from Bengal used to carry food in baskets all the way to Jagannātha Purī, which is a few hundred kilometers away. It was stored for snacks. Every day Mahāprabhu would eat something from it. His servant would give it to Mahāprabhu, informing Him, "This food is prepared by such and such devotee," because he kept the person's name on the food. So Mahāprabhu would eat the food cooked by women, but in this way, there was no possibility of materialistic attachment.

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of Gosvāminī when it comes to the female gurus in our *sampradāya*?

**ANSWER:** Previously there was a tradition that the *mantra* was to be taken from the mother, and not from the male. The mother is considered to be superior to the father. The mother is considered as the first guru of the child. So in our Vaiṣṇava *paramparā*, *dikṣā* was taken from the wife (mother) and not from the husband (father).

So Gosvāminī in this case does not mean the renounced order, but the wife of the guru. This changed at my guru's (our *param-guruji*'s) time, because his father gave *dikṣā*. Before that, it was always from the wife (mother).

In the case of my guru, his mother had left her body before he could take *dikṣā* from her. Then there was a meeting of the scholarly people to decide who would give him (my guru) *dikṣā*. Then it was decided that his father should give *dikṣā*.

**QUESTION:** His father?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** So this is the name (Durgānātha Gosvāmī) which comes before our *param-guruji*?

**ANSWER:** Yes. They (*param-guruji*'s family) were Vaiṣṇavas in Mahāprabhu's *sampradāya*.

**QUESTION:** Is there also something like *veṣa* for women in *uttama-bhakti*?

**ANSWER:** Everybody has the right to take it, but generally it is difficult for women to practice it. But the right is for everybody. However, *dikṣā* in *uttama-bhakti* is complete surrender anyway, so it does not matter. It was only for *niṣṭhā* that a certain class of people would give up everything, so that they could fully take to the path and give guidance to others.

\*

**QUESTION:** If a lady is menstruating, is she allowed to come to Mahārāja's *darśana*, held in the temple room?

**ANSWER:** No. Out of respect for the deity, she should not enter the temple during that period of the month.





## Life Sketch of Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Jī Mahārāja

Om Viṣṇupāda Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja was born in 1918 in a village in West Bengal into a religious, highly cultured, and very affluent *brāhmaṇa* family. From early childhood, he displayed an inclination towards spirituality. After receiving his primary education he moved to Kolkata for further studies, where he lived with his uncle. Within himself he nurtured a deep sense of detachment and a strong desire to be in the company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's devotees in Vṛndāvan.

At the age of only fifteen, he left Kolkata by train to Mathura without informing his family members. In Vṛndāvan, he took shelter of Paṇḍita Bābā Śrī Rāma-Kṛṣṇadāsa Jī, the most famous saint of Vraja at that time, who was living at Daujī Garden, the present site of Vrindavan Research Institute. After keeping the young boy with him for some time, Paṇḍita Bābā asked his only *veṣa* disciple, Śrī Vinoda Vihārī Gosvāmī Vedāntaratna, to initiate him. Śrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja took him under his care at Kāliya-daha, where he gave him *mantra-dikṣa* and the name Haridāsa. About a year later, he also awarded him *bābājī-veṣa dikṣa*.

Śrī Mahārāja Jī studied the various systems of philosophy while rendering service to his guru and Paṇḍita Bābā. After studying Vaiṣṇava philosophy and *sāhitya* from his guru, he went to Benares on the order of his guru to further his studies. There, he engaged in intense study of the various branches of philosophy for twelve years and studied under some of the greatest scholars of national repute of that time. During this time, he earned nine graduate degrees and three post-graduate degrees, covering all the six systems of Indian philosophy and theology.

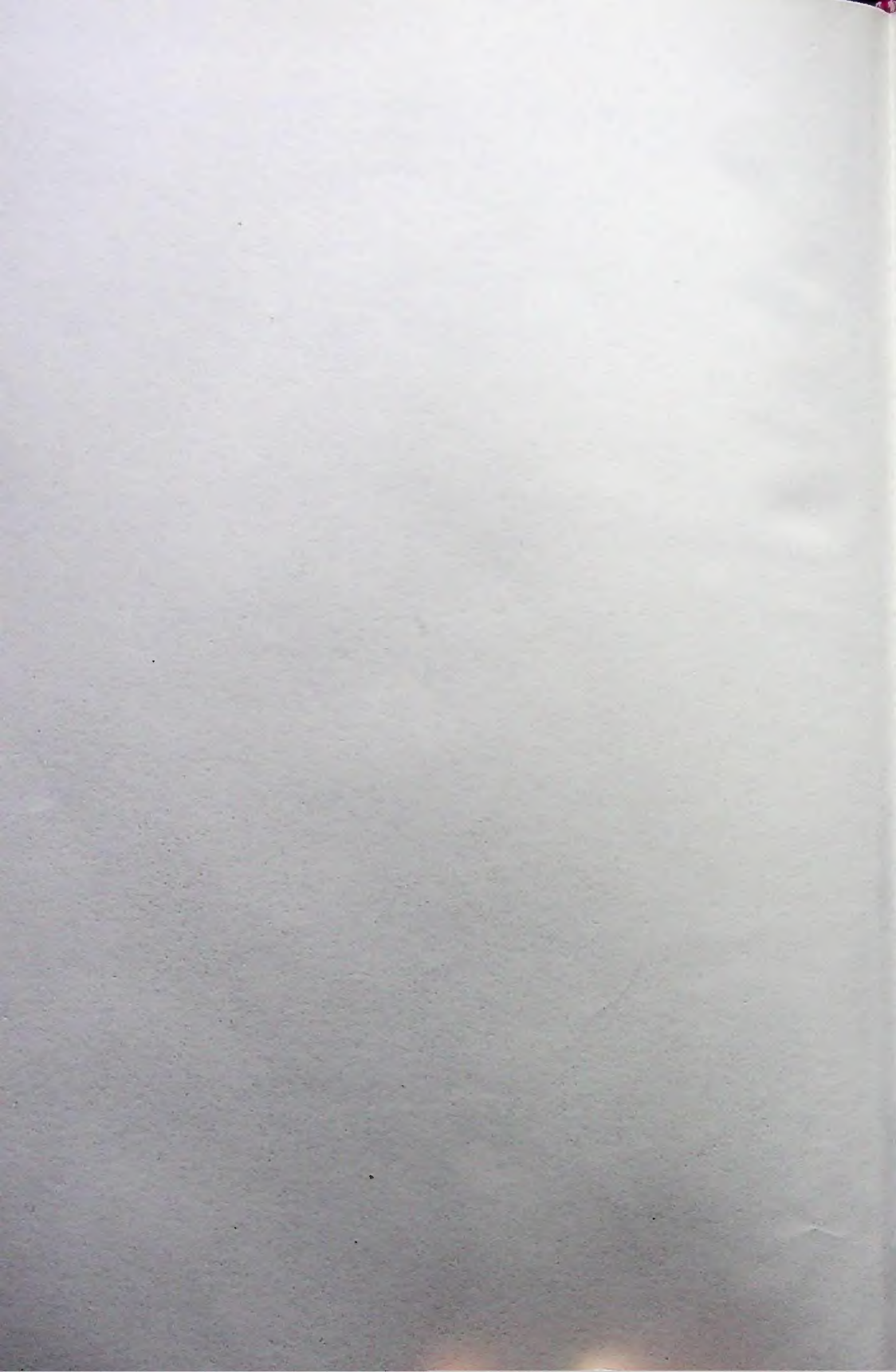
After acquiring unparalleled scholarship in Benares, Mahārāja Jī returned to Vṛndāvan—the land of his guru and his worshipable Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda. When his guru left this world, Mahārāja took a vow of silence (*mauna*) and spent all of his time chanting, remembering Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and serving the deities. On the request of his Nyāya teacher, however, he relaxed his vow of silence and began teaching various subjects to hundreds of students.

Sensing that the writings of the previous *ācāryas* were in danger of being lost, Mahārāja Jī collected old books and manuscripts of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. He started to translate them

into Hindi or Bengali. For that purpose he also established the Śrī Gadādhara-Gaura Hari Press and published close to 100 books, many with his own commentaries. He was the first person to translate and comment upon Jīva Gosvāmī's *Ṣaṭ Sandarbhas* in Hindi.

Mahārāja Jī dedicated his life to rendering service to cows and his deities, chanting, contemplating Kṛṣṇa's *līlās*, writing books, teaching his disciples, and meeting visitors. This great personality disappeared from our material vision and entered the *nitya-līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 at the age of 96.







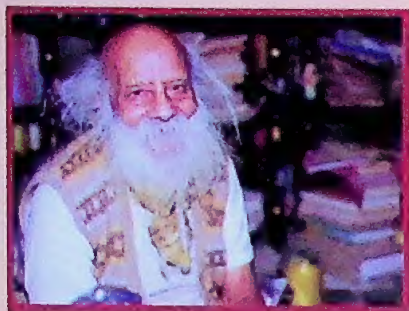
Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrījī Mahārāja was born in 1918 in West Bengal into a pious, highly cultured *brāhmaṇa* family. From his early childhood, he was very devotionally inclined. While he was studying in Calcutta, he decided to leave everything behind and engage in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. At the age of 15, in the year 1933, he boarded a train and arrived in Vrindavan, the land of Kṛṣṇa. There he met Śrī Rāma-Kṛṣṇadāsa Paṇḍita Bābā, one of the greatest saints of Vraja, and lived under his care for one year. Later he was introduced to his would-be guru Śrī Vinoda Vihārī Gosvāmijī. From him he studied the *bhakti* literature and later, on his order, he went to Benares for further studies. Over a span of about twelve years, he earned nine Tīrtha degrees in the field of Vyākaraṇa, Kāvya, Sāṅkhya, Mīmāṃsā, Tarka (*anumāna*), Tarka (*śabda*), Nyāya, Vedānta, Vaiṣṇava Darśana, a śāstrī degree in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, and an ācārya degree in Navya-nyāya.

After returning to Vrindavan, he began teaching various subjects to hundreds of students. In 1965, he established a temple and *āśrama* called Shri Haridas Niwas. He established the Śrī Gadādhara-Gaura Hari Press and printed more than 100 books in Sanskrit, Hindi, and Bengali. He was a great lover of cows and built a beautiful cowshed to house and serve them. Throughout his life, he personally served the cows and his deities in a most exemplary way.

Śrī Guru Darśanam is a book based on questions asked by his students. After a whole day in his *gośālā*, Śrī Mahārājī regularly taught *śāstra* in the evening and had question and answer sessions. Śrī Satyanarayana Dasa used to extempore translate the Hindi replies into English for the non-Hindi speaking students and also recorded them. These tapes were later transcribed and arranged according to topic. The 135 topics discussed in this compendium cover a variety of practical, social, and philosophical aspects of *bhakti* and related subjects.

Śrī Mahārājī left his body in 2013. In his absence Shri Hardias Niwas Go-seva Sansthan manages the *āśrama*, the temple, the book publications and the service to the cows.





“ If you are working according to your liking, then obviously there is no surrender involved in that. Because you keep on doing whatever you like to do. The main thing is to follow the instruction whether you like it or you do not like it. But if the instruction is

just according to your liking and then you are doing that, there is no surrender. Here liking or not liking is not important, but what is important is that you like to follow the orders of the guru. The liking should be for that. Therefore, on this path of the bhakti you have to transcend your material nature, and only then you can do bhakti. Transcending your nature means that you like to do what you are asked to do. When you like to follow the guru's instruction, then you will do anything. But if you just like to do what you like to do, then you are just following your mind, although that happens to be so-called service. But you remain independent and if you stop liking it, you will stop doing it. Therefore, only by true surrender you can go beyond your nature. And when you like to follow, then you naturally like to do whatever you are told to do. Even if there is no liking, at least you follow the discipline. ”

